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# A metaphysics of the countryside

Ronald Paulson

JOHN HAYES  
*The Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough Volume One, Critical Text; Volume Two, Catalogue Raisonné*  
63pp, with 13 colour and 600 monochrome illustrations. Philip Wilson, £77.50 the set.  
0856711142

If Reynolds joined portraiture with the forms and iconography of history painting, Gainsborough did the same with landscape, as though he divined that landscape was replacing history in the painter's pantheon. His later portraits are landscape shapes with the same indeterminacy as the masses of foliage in their backgrounds. Reynolds commented on their vagueness, which he believed explained their "striking resemblance" to the stars. It is not, as used to be thought, that Gainsborough escaped from portraiture into landscape but that he began as a landscapist and ended as a portraitist, working portraits and other figures into his landscapes as he went along. A catalogue of his landscape paintings begins with the question of what to exclude. John Hayes chooses to exclude the "fancy pictures" as well as portraits, presumably on the basis of the size of the figures relative to the landscape; he retains the history paintings, perhaps because there are only two, and the cottage scenes. Sometimes the distinction is fine, as when he keeps "Hounds coursing a Fox" (no 159), calling it "Wooded Landscape with Hounds coursing a Fox", and omits "Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting" (Kenwood).

The *Landscape Paintings of Thomas Gainsborough* is a beautiful, indispensable and superlatively realized book. It is the culmination of twenty years of research that includes Hayes's catalogues of the drawings and the prints and his 1980 Gainsborough retrospective at the Tate. Unlike the recently published Turner and Blake catalogues with their one volume of mostly colour reproductions and another of catalogues, Hayes's book devoted one volume to a monograph on the subject of Gainsborough's landscape art in its historical and biographical contexts, ending with appendices on his "studio", on Gainsborough's pupils, and on other copyists and imitators. The second volume is the illustrated catalogue raisonné of Gainsborough's landscapes; not the least of its importance for scholars will be to serve as a "chronology raisonné". The doing of pictures allows us for the first time to see with some confidence how Gainsborough developed; to test all the generalizations in the old iconographical essays which were often based on insufficient evidence; and to see the conceptualizing of Hayes's essay.

The chief problem of Gainsborough the landscape-painter is his narrow range compared with his pre-eminent rivals, Turner and Constable. In *The House of the Artist*, quoted by Hayes, Gainsborough fell "back on the kind of landscape setting as official as the Victorian photographer's backdrop". Hayes shows that shortly after 1750, after the Gainsboroughs abandoned a careful observation of place in order to rely on "fancifulness of the rococo" or a "tendency towards generalization". As he began to paint portraits, the landscape may be thought to have become even when independent of the figure, a portrait-painter's backdrop. But what backdrops were used to describe these landscapes, which nevertheless in their brilliance of colouring and brushwork, their boldness of effect, dominate any room in which they hang.

One way to deal with the problem is to say that Gainsborough was to a certain degree indulgent towards his own predisposition and talents; he did certain things with great fluency and he did them over and over again, and because he had no

very demanding or receptive market for his landscapes, he did them for himself. Another is to say that Gainsborough's landscapes are as much about the art of painting as about the Sudbury or the Bath countryside. He was a painter whose phases can better be named after the painters he imitated than the places he inhabited: the Dutch landscapists, especially Wynants, were followed by Rubens and van Dyck, and by Murillo, as he moved from one palette and one way of handling paint to another.

Hayes correctly emphasizes the early, pervasive influence of Jacob van Ruisdael. Although a Gainsborough could never be mistaken for a Ruisdael landscape (as it might be, at different times, for a Wynants or a Rubens), the two artists saw landscape in a fundamentally similar way. Ruisdael's most personal and deeply felt landscapes were focused on a single giant tree or a forest and on the facility and mass of foliage. He eschewed historical elements in his landscapes, instead rearranging his topographical elements for picturesque emphasis or melodramatic reinforcement, sometimes adding symbolic ruins of tombstones. A pervasive theatricality was Ruisdael's replacement for history. Gainsborough customarily used both a natural horizon source of light and a studio source to highlight a figure or a natural feature. As the well-known story tells, he would place "cork or coal for his foregrounds, make middle grounds of sand and clay, bushes of mosses and lichens, and set up distant woods of brocoli [sic]. This was his mimetic object, painted by candlelight.

Of the prodigious number of landscape types that were developed by Ruisdael, however, Gainsborough employed only one, and that the least informative or definitive, the most decorative or rhetorical. This is the landscape mode "Wolfgang Stechow describes in his *Dutch Landscape* as "an arrangement of details to fit a preconceived pattern", a "distribution of light and shade... a distribution of compositional convenience", as opposed to a "find in nature", a composition which "seems to obey the laws of natural lighting, is less symmetrical and serves to bring out the individual qualities of the foliage...". It is from the authority of this extreme, and minor, Ruisdael type that Gainsborough's landscapes after 1750 derive.

Hayes has recognized that this "repertory of motifs... forms and rhythms" became a personal vocabulary for Gainsborough - that they "sprang from the depths of his being and gradually came to reflect his feelings about the world around him" better than could "the most penetrating naturalism". But at other times he writes that "Subject-matter of any clearly defined or detailed description, let alone imagery carrying persuasive emotional overtones, was not within Gainsborough's grasp, or scheme of things...". The latter serves specifically as a dismissal of John Barrell's thesis (in *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, 1980) about Gainsborough's depiction of the labouring poor, but it seems to dismiss all "subject-matter".

Hayes solves this problem of Gainsborough's formulaic landscape, by placing him in the history of styles, in particular the rococo. He draws connections between the rococo style and the aesthetic of the picturesque, between French elegance and English implicit play-of-mind, and between these and the homely facts of landscape painting - all of which contribute to the phenomenon of Gainsborough's landscapes. Up to a point this position illuminates the landscapes. But everything depends on how "rococo" is defined. Besides the use of serpentine lines, Hayes describes the rococo style as "sophisticated" but "devoid of any intellectual organization, complex layers of meaning or seriousness of intent". This could be true of Gravelot's or Hayman's rococo, and might allow for a weak sentimentalism, but it does not encompass the rococo of either Hogarth or Richard Bentley. Hayes

quotes for support Robert Wark, another scholar who uses the rococo to explain eighteenth-century English art, on the case of Hogarth and the impossibility of using this playful style "for a deeper and richer emotional content". We might agree that a "deeper and richer emotional content" lies beyond the range of the Hogarthian rococo if Wark means by that the sublime of Constable and Turner; but the nature and degree of the "emotional content", as well as of the "intellectual organization", in Gainsborough's landscapes deserve to be ascertained.

Hogarth's relevance is established by Hayes himself, who makes a great deal of the possibility that Hogarth was involved in Gainsborough's commission to execute the roundel for the Foundling Hospital in 1748. By the third repetition of the story Hayes has Gainsborough "seemingly encouraged by Hogarth" to paint this landscape. (There is, I should add, no direct evidence on this point.) He notices how the Hogarth figures gambling on a gravestone in "Industry and Idleness" (plate 2) were used by Gainsborough in "View of St Mary's Church, Hadleigh", and he acknowledges the connection between Gainsborough, Gravelot, Hayman, Hogarth, the rococo and the St Martin's Lane Academy, as well as Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* of 1753 (which, though published after Gainsborough's return to Sudbury, Hayes assumes he had heard Hogarth "constantly discuss in conversation"). He even believes that "the strikingly perspectival composition" of the Foundling Hospital roundel, "The Charterhouse", derives from Hogarth's prints (I suppose from an interior like "Harlot", plate 4); whereas it seems to me that the single long diagonal of the exterior wall in the roundel has a more reasonable source in some of Canaletto's topographical compositions which Gainsborough could have seen in London in 1747 or 1748. Given this confidence in the presence of Hogarth in Gainsborough's formative years, it is surprising that Hayes does not accept as an influence, along with the decorative cartouches around the Houbraken heads of eminent Englishmen, the illustrative plates of Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* with their witty interplay of the formal and the cognitive, the aesthetic and the moral.

A literary equivalent to Gainsborough's landscapes mentioned by both Hayes and Barrell, in connection, for example, with "The Harvest Wagon" (no 88), is "the mood... of John Gay's influential pastoral, 'The Shepherd's Week'". The latter is a mock-pastoral poem which plays style against action, form against content, and is characterized by the "intellectual organization, complex layers of meaning or seriousness of intent" denied by Hayes to the rococo. I am reminded of the art historian Joseph Burke's

suggestive remarks on two of Gainsborough's "fancy pictures", the "Cottage Girl with Dog and Pitcher" (1785), which he says "evokes the Christ Child as the Good Shepherd", and "The Woodman" (1787), which recalls

the saint or hermit in a wilderness while depicting old age at the mercy of wild nature. Visionary devotion has been translated into the tramp's fear before the lightning; his hands are clasped not in prayer but on his stick; in place of St Jerome's placid lion, a Snyder-like dog shrinks back with snarling defiance.

As if startled by his temerity, Burke retreats: "The evocation of religious art is probably unconscious and due simply to Gainsborough's study of religious paintings by Murillo and similar masters." But he has put his finger on the kind of "translation" that takes place when one style or configuration is used to represent a very different subject. In the ambience of the St Martin's Lane artists the evocation must be a travesty in the manner of "The Shepherd's Week" or Hogarth's *Analysis of Beauty* (plate 1). The woodman and his dog are to a St Jerome and his lion as Gay's butcher's son is to Cupid, son of Mars and Venus: "Sure he was born some bloody Butcher's Son, / Bred up in Shambles, where our Younglings slain, / Erst taught him Mischief and to sport with Pain."

Gainsborough's generally accepted "borrow" of the Rubens "Descent from the Cross" to structure the drinking figures in "The Harvest Wagon" is a similarly muted travesty. This mock-form involves not only painting the rustics in the elegant and fluent style of Rubens (all that Hayes and Barrell see) but evoking in a sense that Hogarth would have understood, in these "peasants", striving upward toward a drink of wine from the "leathern Bottle, long in Harvest try'd" (bequeathed in Gay's poem by Blouzelinda to her lover Grubbinol) a low version of the figures reaching up for Christ's Body and Blood in the eucharistic "Descent from the Cross". The effect is not deflation but the engendering of equivalence and contemporary myth. These peasants, participating in some primitive fertility ritual in a landscape bathed in the most wonderful yellows and greens, are conveyed with an eloquence that for the only time in English painting joins figures and landscape in a single action. (I am thinking of the discrepancy between fluent landscape and clumsy figures in Turner and Constable.)

Hayes is unequivocal in his dismissal of Barrell's thesis that we should examine closely the figures in Gainsborough's landscapes. True, to detect any social comment or submerged ideology as Barrell does in conventional scenes of rural lovers or even "peasants" or wood-carriers whose figures and faces are pretty masks is absurd. But to ignore

completely the configurations - the choices Gainsborough made of staffage, especially the changes he rang on particular groups, and the development from one set of dramatic personae to another, is also misleading. Hayes takes the figures seriously as conventional staffage, but he could have corrected Barrell's emphasis without dismissing it. For example, the two or three early landscapes on which Barrell bases his thesis of a contrast between "Industry and Idleness" - working class and ruling class - subordinate the workers to the lovers (who are also working-class), turning labour into if anything a comment on love, certainly not vice versa.

The various possible approaches to figures in a Gainsborough landscape can be charted in his best-known portrait group, that of "Mr and Mrs Andrews" (1748-50, National Gallery). John Berger in *Ways of Seeing*, has pointed to the sense of ownership implicit in the stretch of land to the right of Mr and Mrs Andrews, and Lawrence Gowing has responded acerbically:

The explicit theme of a contemporary and precisely analogous design by Gainsborough's mentor Francis Hayman suggests that the people in such pictures were engaged in philosophic enjoyment of "the great principle... the genuine Light of uncorrupted and unpurported Nature."

Berger replies: "... this in no way precludes them from being at the same time proud landowners. In most cases the possession of private land was the precondition for such philosophic enjoyment - which was not uncommon among the landed gentry. This proprietorial 'nature' Berger opposes to 'the nature of other men', which consisted of the poaching laws, punishments for as little as stealing a potato, and the strictness of property limits. He reads this unconscious ideology into Gainsborough's portrait of the Andrews couple.

Both Gowing and Berger omit to mention that the painting is a marriage picture. Hayes recognizes this fact, relating the way the fields are being (in Berger's terms) worked to the fertility to be expected of the marital union (the sheaves of stooked corn being "a traditional symbol of human fertility"). He insists nevertheless that the commission was primarily an opportunity or excuse for Gainsborough to paint a landscape; a generalization one would not want to contest, though it leaves out Mr and Mrs Andrews.

I would not want to go so far as Barrell might and see the hunting husband and the meditative wife as illustrations of Industry and Idleness; though they may (in Gowing's terms) suggest the active and the contemplative life. Yet as so often with the "rococo" Gainsborough, incongruous details stand out: the

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poppy in the right foreground, a single touch of bright red; the small white flowers further back along the row of sheaves draw our attention; but above all, the roundish, blank shape in Mrs Andrews's hand, defined only by a feather, which seems to indicate that Gainsborough intended to paint a bird, most probably a gamebird, in her lap – and had second thoughts.

If marriage is the occasion for this picture, and the field is a conventional symbol of generation (or of property), then the tree suggests the organic growth of a family and an estate. But the dog, not sleeping at the couple's feet as Marital Fidelity, is a hunting dog, attached only to the husband. The wife, enclosed by the lines of a green metal bench, is sharply separated from the landscape. In the midst of all this the unfinished, rejected bird illustrates a rule of interpretive study: *cherchez l'erreur*. Was it to be related to the husband's gun – something he had shot and presented to his wife, thus becoming a symbol of the slough, *bird* – (the maiden) of his possession of her? Does the dead bird in this painting of around 1750 point toward the hunted Acton-as-sing or the fox coursed by hounds of around 1785 (nos 159–60)? Is the bird a metonymy for the situation of the landowner in relation to nature, which he has here cribbed, cabined and confined, or for the husband in relation to his wife?

It is useful to know, as Marcia Pointon has shown in her essay "Gainsborough and the Landscape of Retirement" (1979), that Richard Graves's poem "On Gainsborough's Landscapes with Portraits; full length Figures less than life, drawn in Pairs as walking through woods, etc." (in *Shelton's Miscellany* 1759–63) connects "pairs" of Mr and Mrs Andrews with Adam and Eve in a lost paradise which through Gainsborough's brush becomes "a Paradise regain'd". Pointon argues, like Gowing, that scenes of this sort are literary, illustrative of the retirement theme or melancholy contemplation, the result of reading Gray's "Elegy" written in a Country Church Yard and other graveyard poetry. But the phrases she solemnly quotes from Gainsborough's letters of 1775 – twenty years later – to support her thesis ("the Vanity of the Age" and "the great Giver of All will make better allowance for us than we make for one another") are out of context and confuse a theme of melancholy vanitas with Gainsborough's epistolary wit and his spirits.

There may be a sense in which his lovers, often shown standing before or near a blasted tree, could be taken for Adam and Eve in a landscape, but given the context of Hogarth's *Analysis* and London in the 1740s, they seem more ironic and playful, in manner of "The Shepherd's Week" than conducive to serious melancholy meditation. The chrono-

logy, in fact, tells the story. The juxtaposition of lovers and tree, sometimes on a hilltop, begins in 1755–57 (nos 59, 62, 64, 65) and certainly reflects a wry contrast of young love and the old, either pollarded or dead tree, which by 1780 (perhaps now from a reading of Graves or Gray) has become the more literal-minded vanitas (image of the lovers in a churchyard reading an epitaph on a gravestone (to be contrasted also with the boys cheerfully gambling on a gravestone in the 1748 "View of St Mary's Church, Hadleigh").

As early as 1748–50 Gainsborough painted a pair of rustic lovers balanced by a black and a white cow (and by another male-female pair with a donkey). By 1762–63 the lovers are again appearing with a pair of cows (79) and in 1766 (87), a major work, two lovers at a stile are paired with two horses, one light and one dark (corresponding to the lovers' dress) drawing a cart up a road into the distance. In 1771–73 lovers are juxtaposed with a line of cattle being driven down a path (103), and in no 109 the beau is separated from his lover by the inconvenient cattle (see also 108, 113).

All we have to do is consult "Two Shepherd Boys with Dogs Fighting" of 1783 (Kenwood), where the humans and animals are unquestionably paralleled as to hair-colour and allegiance, for it to become fairly clear that the parallels in the landscapes cannot be fortuitous. The close affinity of Gainsborough and Rowlandson is not made enough of by Hayes in his section on influences. We know that Rowlandson copied Gainsborough drawings and that his landscapes are often comic versions of Gainsborough's. But while he contrasts aesthetically "picturesque" livestock and "beautiful" lovers (showing Dr Syntax to prefer the former), Gainsborough seeks out the affinity, and it is an affinity that links the aesthetic and the human in a way not too different from the witty aesthetic-moral play of Hogarth's *Analysis* plates. A basic strategy of his early Dutch-inspired landscapes seems to be the juxtaposition of a pair (lovers, Mr and Mrs Andrews, Adam and Eve) with some equivocal symbol, a dead bird or tree, a bovine couple or a lemming-like procession of cattle.

The first peasant family picture appears in 1753–54, the group posed next to a tree (no 45 alive, in 44 dead), but the peasants do not become a strong subject until 1767–72, when they are on horseback going climbing over a hill (in 1778–80 seated around a camp-fire), with an emphasis on the interplay of male and female – she often ignoring him for her own thoughts (which Pointon would conclude are melancholy). The cottage scenes, showing peasants around a cottage door, begin in 1772 (105), and finally the late, stark land-

scapes with only a shepherd and his sheep begin in 1783 (137, 143–47). These continue to the end of Gainsborough's life. Is there, one wonders, any significance in the fact that he painted lovers in his twenties, developing the ironic parallels with trees and cattle in his thirties and forties; in his forties began to paint his peasants – mixed groups, some families – and in his fifties painted solitary shepherds in rugged, lonely terrain? By this time he was also, of course, painting his fancy pictures of Murillo waifs, and in the light of these works it is possible to speculate that he may have learned subsequently to see his landscapes through poets' eyes and that his progression may have been from Gray to Gray, from Augustan to what used to be called pre-Romantic.

If the figures may be said to have some function beyond purely formal or decorative in the landscapes, what of the landscape formula itself? The common element, which was already present in the Dutch landscapes of his youth and persisted in a more painterly and emphatic way in Rubens's landscapes, was a confluence of serpentine lines in a lazy Y or gamma. In one of Hayes's sensitive formal analyses he describes the rooco serpentine structure of a landscape in St Louis (no 53), where the "powerful serpentine line begins in the foreground, sweeps over the hilltop, passes down and beyond the bank into the middle distance and thence, through the agency of the winding river, into the very depths of the composition." This is, of course, the way the eye ordinarily functions in a Claude landscape. In this particular Gainsborough landscape, though Hayes should have mentioned the remarkable discontinuity of the serpentine line, the eye tends to follow the broken lines into the scene because the figures on the road are travelling in that direction. What Hayes does not mention is that in the vast majority of Gainsborough's landscapes the figures are moving away from the horizon and towards the viewer, down into either the middle distance or the foreground of the composition and off the canvas. With all of the landscapes in front of us, we can now see that statistically this form predominates, becoming more emphatic in the later paintings, until in the landscapes with a single shepherd and his flock the downward sweep defines mountain gorges.

Instead of leading into the landscape, the winding track usually draws the eye down and out of the bottom, or into a pool or a ravine of some sort near the bottom. Gainsborough's early copy (drawing) of Ruisdael's "La Forêt" described by Hayes (Gauguin Mary Woodall) as "a faithful repetition", in fact cuts off the bottom of Ruisdael's composition, leaving it open where Ruisdael closed it. The line is rooco, certainly, and



Balhus painted this portrait of Miro with his daughter Dolores during the years 1937–38. The Spanish artist allowed Balhus as many sittings as he wanted. His daughter, a restless figure in the picture, compared with her motherless, staring father, seems to have been less willing than him to make sacrifices for art. This is one of the many illustrations in Balhus (155pp. Skira/Macmillan, £15, 0 333 34485 5) by Jean Leymarie which will be reviewed in a future issue of the TLS.

the faces and figures when discernible are pretty, but the fact that they are all gravitating downwards is surely a distinctive feature. And the effect of the various stages of style is to give different meanings to the movement: whether a light, airy merging or metamorphosis of human into nature, the metamorphosis summed up in the story of Diana and Actaeon, or a darker, more intense, hectic, "romantic" composition that melodramatizes the situation.

Although it is still reductive, the opinion of the contemporary reviewer of Gainsborough's "Mrs Richard Bainesley Sheridan" (1785, National Gallery, Washington) that "she is painted under the unbrave of a romantic tree, and the accompanying objects are descriptive of retirement" might by then have been acceptable to

Gainsborough himself – though I suspect he had expressed his latest more accurately when he wrote his letter of 1772: "How to satisfy your taste? Friends (ie, those who discourse on or patronize the topographical retirement?), whilst you steal into the mild Evening gleam and middle time." Not confined within literary topos, Gainsborough's paintings initiate the landscape tradition of personal fantasy in England. Out of Ruisdael's imaginary Italianate landscapes and his syncretic "Jewish Cemetery", and out of Zuccarelli's brainless decorations, Gainsborough develops a typically English metaphysics or economy which he passes on to Turner, Constable, Palmer, Stanley Spencer and Graham, Sutherland, the great visionary English landscapists.

## SOCIAL HISTORY

## J. S. HOLLIDAY

*The World Rushed In: The California Gold Rush Experience*  
590pp. Gollancz, £12.50.  
0 335 03236 7

## RALPH MANN

*After the Gold Rush: Society in Grass Valley and Nevada City, California, 1849–1870*  
200pp. Stanford University Press.  
\$5.95  
0 8047 1136 4

"I wonder sometimes what you two actually imagined gold-digging was", said Howard told his reluctant biographer *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. "I've come to the conclusion you thought the gold would be lying around like pebbles, and nothing else but bend down and pick it up and get it by the sackful." Such was the naïveté of Americans and foreigners who came to California in the years 1849 to 1852, the years in which California became simultaneously a state of the US and a state of the human mind. Those who migrated there by land and sea were conscious of participating in a quest to a democratic El Dorado where, as they believed, the dreams would be paved with gold. Many of the early miners were lucky, as well as a few of the later ones. But for the great majority, California proved to be a bitter, glorious delusion. "If it was a simple as all that," Howard went on to observe, "gold would be worth more than pebbles."

The gold had been discovered in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in January, 1848, a few days before Mexico officially ceded control of California and Oregon to the US. By autumn the mineral range was known to extend for 400 miles. But an unimagined wilderness – the prairies, deserts and mountains of Indian Territory – separated California from Missouri, the starting-point of most overland journeys. Those who preferred not to walk the continent for months had either to sail around Cape Horn or else to cross Central America overland. Yet the insistent rumours of fortune seemed more and more alluring. Dozens of joint-stock companies were formed to lessen the individual's risks on a long march, and in the spring of 1849 the members of

## The democratic El Dorado

Mark Abley

these companies set out on the mass migration westward. (The goldseekers' ethos of rampant individualism was complemented, even challenged, by the necessity of co-operation in the wilderness.) At least 42,000 travellers reached California by the overland trails in 1849 alone; almost as many arrived by sea; several thousand others died along the way or turned back in despair. In the Black Rock Desert of what is now northern Nevada, some of the men noticed "a very beautiful mirage in the southwest, in which appeared a long lagoon of blue water and small islands reflected in its delightful looking bosom." The famished oxen saw it too, and ran towards it. Their corpses soon littered the sand. Animals and men alike seemed peculiarly susceptible to mirages in the south-west.

One of the '49ers was a young farmer from upstate New York called William Swain. An upright resilient man with a sharp eye for the natural world, Swain was unusual only for the persistence with which he kept a diary during the seven months of his journey from Youngstown to northern California. This diary, along with his occasional letters home, forms the narrative basis of J. S. Holliday's remarkable book *The World Rushed In*, which uses Swain's experience as exemplary of the sufferings and dreams of all the migrants. They were a surprisingly literary bunch; long evenings around the camp-fire, or mornings while their worn-out animals grazed, gave ample opportunity for the men to write extensive diaries. The shock of the wilderness encouraged introspection; the shock of California did not. Holliday has incorporated short extracts from more than 500 diaries and letter-writers to flesh out Swain's version of events, or to contrast with it. Preferring celebration to complaint, Swain tended to be laconic about disappointments on the trail; what he mentioned simply as "the springs, or Rabbit Hole Wells", one of his colleagues describes as "an abomination of desolation... an heap of hills into which slowly percolated filthy-looking, brackish water." Holliday has also included the letters sent to William Swain by his forlorn wife and brother, and (unlike so many writers about the gold rush) he gives detailed information about the migrants' unromantic return.

For theirs was a quest of a kind new in American history: few of its

participants expected to stay in the promised land for long. Seeing it as a dreary tract of land, the men were, Holliday writes, "concerned only with how to make the greatest amount of money in the shortest time. With that common motive, they also shared an indifference toward California and its future." The general desire was to get in, get rich, and get out. And whereas the nation's earlier migrations, such as the recent Mormon trek to Salt Lake, had been family affairs, the California gold-rush was almost exclusively male. It was a mercenary pilgrimage. After spending a few months or years rummaging for gold, most of the '49ers sailed home; in 1850 a total of 26,593 men and eight women left San Francisco by sea. Among them was William Swain, sadder, wiser, and richer by \$500 for a year of toil in El Dorado. In the first letter that his family had received after he reached California, Swain told them, "I have not seen the hour yet when I regretted starting." But he also informed his wife that there was some talk between us of your coming to the country. For God's sake think not of it. Stay at home."

To begin with, the journey westward had been longer and more strenuous than any of the gold-seekers had imagined. As the weather turned harsh, the animals died, the wagons were abandoned, the food ran out, and their own numbers dwindled, the intrepid faith of the '49ers became tinged with doubt and grief. Their fears of hostile Indians had proved largely unfounded, yet so had their confidence in the chosen route. Cholera and tick-fever were common in the plains and deserts; scurvy and diarrhoea plagued the migrants as they climbed the Sierra Nevada and entered California. Yet the bodily discomforts would have mattered little to the survivors if only the long-awaited gold had truly been plentiful for all. The rigours of the trek preserved an impressive discipline among the majority of immigrants; but in California, then as later, moral restraints slipped away. Heinrich Schliemann, who arrived in San Francisco by ship in 1851, was at first lost in admiration and wonder for the achievements of the previous two years. "But these sentiments soon disappear," he noted scathingly, "when the new arrival... sees that all is based here on swindling, that all is abominable falsehood, fraud and humbug, or in plain California: that all is calculated to 'shave'."

Such opinions were not limited to embittered foreigners. The American historian William E. Connelley chose to describe the gold-rush in terms before which a European would surely hesitate: "It revolutionized America... It was the beginning of our national madness, of our insanity of greed. It marks the advent of character decadence and American moral degeneracy." The pursuit of happiness had turned into a lust for wealth. Even if other motives – adventure, wanderlust, a faith in Manifest Destiny – helped to persuade some of the gold-seekers to venture forth, the primary motive was materialistic. Fittingly enough, a reluctance to part with possessions, even when their lives were in danger, afflicted many of the emigrants on their appalling journey over the high Sierra in autumn. The ones who reached California in safety were to discover a society where the real fortunes were being accumulated by gamblers, speculators, prostitutes and merchants, who could sell a boiled egg for 75 cents or rent an upstairs room in San Francisco for \$1,800 a month. By 1850, there were simply too many miners chasing the gold. "The hills have been cut and scalped", the naturalist John Muir was soon to observe, "and every gorge and gulch and valley torn to pieces and dismembered, expressing a fierce and desperate energy hard to understand."

Holliday, who has been preparing this work for three decades, probably understands the gold-rush better than anyone alive. He has created a book of immense value to our knowledge not only of the physical details of the migration but also of its psychology and mythology; *The World Rushed In* evokes the grand illusion no less vividly than the angry disillusion. By choosing to seek their fortunes in some dust across the continent, even the most pious '49ers had behaved as gamblers – but the realization, that the letters sent to Swain by his family are a particularly valuable as a rare expression of the feelings of "California Widows", one letter from Sabrina Swain begins cheerfully enough by talking of "the privilege of mingling with Christian friends", but ends in a cry of raw pain: "William, I cannot wait much longer. I want to see you so bad." In the end, Holliday's view of the subject is far different from the conventional wisdom: The gold rush was in many respects a national tragedy, much like a war, with families separated not only by distance but equally by fear and silence. Swain was a fortunate soldier: he retreated with his pride and his marriage intact.

As the gold fever died away, most of the mining camps died with it. A few, however, endured to become towns and cities. The two most important mining towns in the state were the neighbouring settlements of Grass Valley and Nevada City, about 75 miles north-east of Sacramento, in a region where the mineral deposits were

rich enough to be worked continually in spite of depression, speculation, and gold rushes elsewhere. The early years of these rough communities are analysed in *After the Gold Rush*, a book written from the refreshing belief that "western American history is largely an urban history". Ralph Mann suggests that as the mining towns became permanently established, the skills and needs of foreigners gradually took precedence over those of the restless native-born Americans. Two decades after the gold rush, only a quarter of all men in Grass Valley were American by birth; more than half came from Britain (particularly Cornwall) and Ireland. In fact, Grass Valley was well on its way to becoming a Cornish miners' town.

But the book promises more insights than it delivers. For one thing, it lacks immediacy; we hear directly from few of the settlers or visitors, as though Mann equates vitality with unreliability. (He would not dream of quoting Schliemann's jaundiced comment: "Nevada City, a small and extremely nasty place in the midst of a pine forest".) More seriously, he admits that "the heart of the study's data was drawn from the manuscript census records of the two towns", which were then "corroborated by a computer program". But a torrent of numerals falls short of an educated understanding, especially when the evidence is suspect from the start. As a matter of policy, for example, the census-takers did not count prostitutes, and they underestimated the number of Chinese and Latin Americans. One of the many tables shows that by 1870, Grass Valley had 795 American-born residents; another, that it had 795 American-born working men; a third, that it had 795 American-born males. Mann also indicates that of the 765 miners living in Nevada City in 1850, only four were married – a figure which is absurdly small, unless it reports the number of men whose wives were present in the town.

The gold telling moments in *After the Gold Rush* come not from such computerized statistics, but from Mann's scrutiny of contemporary newspapers. As *The World Rushed In* so beautifully demonstrates, history is always a study of perception. And sometimes the perceptions of the Californian pioneers cast a long shadow over present-day America. Aaron Sargent, editor of the Nevada City *Journal*, welcomed the vigilante groups created to rid the mining camps of Mexicans by saying, "The extermination of such Ishmaelites is the only safeguard of society." That acid mixture of religion, ignorance and militarism survives to this day, unfortunately; Aaron Sargent has successors who look forward to nuclear war as an act of divine and cleansing justice. Or as Mann ruefully admits, "The sense that American civilization has to overcome rival cultures carried within it the seeds of moral corrosion. Know Nottingham, and at times mob action."

## Manufacture triumphant

## John Butt

## BARRIE TRINDER

*The Making of the Industrial Landscape*  
207pp. Dent, £12.95.  
0 460 04427 3

The effects of industrialization on the topography of mining and manufacturing districts are ostensibly the concern of this book, but essentially the treatment is historical and chronological rather than geographical: there is little comment on the contemporary scene, and no discussion at all of the determinants of change after 1914. Barrie Trinder has made a contribution to economic, industrial and social history, but very much on his own often idiosyncratic terms. Yet there can be no doubt that the book makes stimulating use of contemporary accounts, many of them likely to provoke discussion of a number of issues which Dr Trinder does not satisfactorily settle.

None of these is more intriguing or thought-provoking than the relationship between rural society and industry, particularly locally based or, more strikingly, the evolution of towns in England and Wales. Only occasionally does Trinder discuss this question of the rural-urban relationship, although the dominant form of social organization during this period, Trinder supplies

significant group who were sometimes responsible for the nature and scale of industrial development, notably in mining. Some regions of the country, the South-West in particular, never lost their rural character, even though mining and quarrying left permanent marks upon them. Local food supplies, augmented from further afield as the population grew, were a prerequisite for industrial development, and the symbiosis between agriculture and industry, notably in textile and pottery-making districts, was very apparent to contemporaries. Particularly relevant for the subject of this book is the accumulation of skills in rural districts; for example, masons, mill-wrights, clock-makers, viewfinders and surveyors all adapted their abilities to the new opportunities and problems posed by an industrializing society.

The twenty years from 1790 to 1810 Trinder describes as the heroic age. This chronology is wholly arbitrary and nonsensical and it is astonishing to find no discussion here of whether the wars of these years accelerated or retarded industrial evolution. Did wars cause a misallocation of human resources in a fundamentally "labour-intensive economy, and a sharply increasing public sector borrowing requirement (with adverse effects on price levels and interest rates) not offer at least the prospect of a slackening in normal economic activity?

The later chapters of the book are much more satisfying. The engineers took up the challenges presented by economic development: the building of docks, harbours, roads, canals and railways form the substance of one chapter and the growing awareness of the horrors of industrialism – slums, pollution, unemployment and problems of public health – and some very interesting comparisons between Victorian celebrations of triumphant manufacturing, symbolized in the Crystal Palace, and the extension of industrialism to new centres such as Middlesbrough and Barrow, are competently discussed, as in the developing critique of the new environment and its values. The illustrations are apt, and the bibliography is useful.

much detail about transport, especially canals, industrial colonies in textile and mining districts and the development of steam power. However, little that is original emerges.

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## Rural meanings

## Anne M. Wagner

## LISA VERGARA

*Rubens and the Poetics of Landscape*  
207pp, with two colour and 119 black-and-white illustrations.  
Yale University Press, £29.  
0 300 02508 4

*Rubens and the Poetics of Landscape* is ambitious. It takes as its point of departure the effort to assign meaning to Rubens's landscapes – a task only inadequately performed, Lisa Vergara claims, by previous historians of Rubens's art. In order to achieve this, she writes, it was necessary to have "a wider intellectual framework than the older literature offered." That statement alone would enlist most readers' interest, even their sympathy, and ensure their attention. In the end, though, it guarantees their disappointment.

Earlier writers have taken either of two views: that the landscapes are readily understood, or that they cannot be analyzed. Vergara's argument, by contrast, is that given the right tools the complex meanings of the landscapes can be understood. It is essential to have a grasp of Rubens's biography, an idea of his intellectual formation, a way

of reading the landscapes in the light of classical literature and its reinterpretation by "contemporary authors and a reading of the pictures themselves. This is ambitious, but also sensible: Rubens was a man with an active grasp of ancient literature. He literally built (symbols into his house, his letters, his library, his art and his mind. And he painted landscapes which are structured and coded to allow them to carry various meanings – for example, ideas about continuity, fertility and order as essential to nature.

At the core of this argument about meaning are Rubens's rural landscapes. Unlike his pastoral views, with their amorous shepherds in idealized settings, these pictures are specific places, with names, and their incorporation of drawings of peasants, cattle and wagons done from life is only one proof of the use they make of observation. More important, perhaps, is a new coincidence between topographical and compositional order. Following Brueghel's lead, Rubens employs the markers and boundaries which divide unfenced land – roads, brooks, stands of trees – to establish the interrelationships of the painted world he presents. An equation is made in works like these between the processes of sight and those of painting, even though other, more literary, ideas are suggested by

the figures within each landscape.

"Het Steen" and "The Rainbow" take their place in Vergara's account both as the fruit of Rubens's retreat to the countryside outside Antwerp (he purchased the chateau of Het Steen in 1635), and as a fruition of the rural landscape type. Following long-standing tradition, the two are read as pendants, and attention is paid to seeing the compositional and conceptual links between them. They are co-extensive and reflective; they open on to and close into each other. A cycle begun in "Het Steen", with its golden morning light, is completed in "The Rainbow", where lengthening shadows and returning peasants signal the end of the working day. Together, the pictures are seen as examples of Rubens's painted gurgling, the final proof of his long-standing adherence to the idea of *ut pictura poesis*.

These ideas are provocative; if not conclusive, Rubens was a humanist, and we wait for an analysis of temporariness which would suggest a reason for the difference between his landscapes, say, and those of Brueghel, which respond it would seem to a rather different brand of humanism. A problem arises, however, around just these kinds of conclusions: Rubens's landscapes, Vergara believes, are "intensely

personal", reflections of the "artist's self-conception". His "individual nature", his "personal sense of place". This view has several sources: the oldest accounts of Rubens's life, which describe his preoccupation with landscape in his final years; the artist's use of Het Steen and its surroundings as a landscape setting; the fact that some fourteen of the landscapes were in Rubens's possession when he died. (For Vergara, this is the "majority" of these paintings, though the recent landscape volume of the *Corpus Rubenianum* puts their total number close to fifty.) But the most important clue for this idea seems to be the earlier Rubens literature itself, which habitually sees Rubens's art as an extension of his life rather than as a painted counterproposal to it. As Vergara puts it, Rubens's art and life are "all of a piece".

The suggestion is not just improbable – it raises serious conceptual and interpretative difficulties. Even granted that Rubens was an exceptionally well integrated human being, successful in and unalienated from his work as a painter, it is hard to know what kinds of conclusion that fact licenses us to draw: Rubens's landscapes in this argument work no more "personal" than any other aspect of his work, and if all this work is "personal", the distinction at once becomes useless. (The idea that

the landscapes are "the most personal" is not very helpful either.) And as we proceed with this line of thought, it provokes questions it ought itself to answer. If in fact the majority of Rubens's landscapes were in his hands when he died, how are we to know that Rubens did not keep them as part of a studio stock of pictures ready for purchase? Might they not simply have not yet been sold during the four or five years that intervened (at most) between their execution and his death? (The last letter Rubens wrote is about the sale of a view of the Biscornel from among the pictures in his studio.) What of the pictures which did leave his hands? Is their character any different from those Rubens kept? Can personal sensibility and patronage be said to overlap? Around what issues? And what of the twenty-nine landscapes owned by other artists which Rubens kept? What happens to the "personal" view there?

My point is simply this: despite an effort to sustain an argument about meaning in Rubens's landscapes, Vergara finally seems to fall back on just the clichés she meant to avoid. Her are not sure if words like "personal" and "unique" should be taken to indicate that Rubens's landscapes are unintelligible to his contemporaries, even though, clarifying such points ought to be the first priority of the historian.

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friendship between a humble, brainless lower-middle-class woman and a titled lady in the armed services, all set on a colonial atoll. The writing is in blinding technicolor and trashy in the extreme.

It is surprising, therefore, that *Pomp and Circumstance* (1960), set in Samoa, the same mythical South Pacific colony which Coward dreamt up here, and concerning a visit to it by the Queen and Prince Philip, is as successful as it is. One reason is that Coward is acting again; his narrator is a woman, featherbrained, snobbish, selfish, of course – but extremely funny. If it were not so funny one would read the novel – it is as shapeless as the stories and, moving towards the end, the august event of the supposedly gratifying arrival of the royals which has not yet quite happened when the book ends, far too long – with a bleaker eye. Stop for reflection and you notice the casual sadism with which children are repeatedly made the subject of accidents, hit on the head, kicked in the balls, cut on the legs, knocked off bikes, and infected with chickenpox. You notice too how, despite Coward's keenness on the cheerful amorality of the native Samoans (all extremely handsome), everyone in the book who commits adultery is vengefully smitten down with chickenpox too. And the

sentences, though shapeless, are monotonous, they are articulated with nothing stronger than commas, and like a wilful and lovably dim woman speaking they go wandering on and on and then have something frightfully amusing right at the end.

At one point the narrator's mother writes from England about her experience of a modern play at "the Court Theatre": "personally, I didn't care for it much. It was all about the lower classes of course, everything is nowadays, and there was no scenery to speak of, just doors and windows, so one never knew where anybody was...". In the complacent and yet embattled preface to the *Collected Short Stories* Coward lashes out sarcastically at "our present-day playwrights" who do not respect the conventions in which he himself had achieved his success. His is, it reminds one, a deeply conventional world, a world in which one always knows where people are. The most tellingly repeated adjective throughout his work is "gay"; it is joined in his novel by "true-blue". This mixture of facetiousness and unthinking conservatism creates an unlovable habit. Yet his blinkered, headlong humour secures his place among the great comedians.

## Woman-head and mother-love

Louis Allen

JUNICHIRO TANIZAKI

*The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi and Arrowroot*  
Translated by Anthony H. Chambers  
200pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.  
0 436 51602 0

*Some Prefer Nettles*  
Translated by Edward G. Seidensticker  
155pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.  
0 436 51603 9

*The Makdoka Sisters*  
Translated by Edward G. Seidensticker  
530pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.95.  
0 436 51604 7

Anthony Chambers's new translation of *Bushiko Hiwa* and *Yoshino Kuzu* and the reprinting of Edward G. Seidensticker's versions, first published in the 1950s, of two other novels, give us an opportunity to see several facets of Junichiro Tanizaki, and confirm Donald Keene's verdict on his diversity of subject and consistency of themes. He is an obsessive writer, full of paradoxes; aware of the link between beauty and pain, longing to be subjugated by cruel women with beautiful feet, regretting the passing of the feminine ideal of his mother's day but eagerly welcoming the taller, more confident modern Japanese woman, admiring discretion and reveling in sensuality, able to appreciate both the viscous texture of a fruit pulp and the pervasive odour of human excrement.

Born in Tokyo in 1886, his early writings reflect a satanism (*akuma shugi*) easily recognizable as an offshoot of the European Decadents. Tanizaki's love of modernity is shown by his wish to see Tokyo rebuilt as a great western city like Paris or New York after the earthquake of 1923 had destroyed it. The citizens would then be themselves over to the out-and-out westernization they so obviously desired. But Tanizaki left for Osaka that same year, and discovered instead that traditional Japan appealed to him: not the Japan of the Tokugawa, but of the high middle ages. Hence his repeated attempts to render *The Tale of Genji* into twentieth-century Japanese, his constant allusions to *Nô* and Kabuki plays, and his use of medieval background for some of his Osaka period novels and short stories.

Even so, his knowledge of Europe is not dismissed. Tanizaki uses with great freedom all those various devices summed up by Jean Prévert as *preux* a *l'appui*: chronicles, diaries, letters, the narration of first- and third-person narratives. *The Secret History of the Lord of Musashi* shows the best is not a reader of Stendhal for nothing.

As a boy, his hero Terakatsu sees the heads of defeated enemies ritually washed and combed and their ears pierced by a young girl, and conceives a craving not merely to have his head dressed and shaved by her, but to be killed, so that her cruel, efficient hands will manipulate his dead features. He penetrates the enemy camp and brings in their leader's head, whose nose he slices off to make of it a *mekubi* or "woman-head" for the girl to wash. The enemy retreat, bereft of their leader, whose daughter Kikyo is taken by Terakatsu's lord, Norishige. Terakatsu then witnesses a number of attempts by mysterious samurai archers to clip off Norishige's nose, leaving him with a barell and distorted speech. Following one of these samurai, Terakatsu is led to a deep shaft which turns out to be the bottom of Kikyo's privy. (Ladies of noble birth were not allowed to see their own excreta, hence the deep shaft to be filled in for ever when she dies.) He climbs up the shaft unaided – there are footholds – and into her room.

He knows her to be behind the attempts on Norishige, but instead of betraying her, offers to help. She has an obsessive dream of her murdered father and only the un-nothing of Norishige will appease his spirit.

Terakatsu ambushes Norishige as he totters away to urinate after a night of drunken ecstasy with Kikyo. He pounces on him, half strangles him, then slices off the nose, characteristically leaving behind a note plastered to the bleeding face to say

he'd got all he wanted, and Norishige need fear no further attempt upon himself.

But there is a further twist to Terakatsu's pursuit. "His ultimate goal", writes Tanizaki, "was not the lady's revenge, but the tableau that would result from that revenge." Yes, of course, he is a voyeur too. Unfortunately, he has to leave Norishige's castle and take over his own fief on his father's death. He is sitting one night with his young wife Shosetsu and her ladies in waiting, and recounts the dressing of the heads. Transported by a fearful ecstasy, he re-enacts it for them. Terakatsu forces his servants to kneel under the flood of torches until his head protrudes, and commands a terrified girl to cut off the helpless Dami's nose. On Shosetsu's pleading, the servant is spared, and the evening ends with the ladies painting his nose red instead. Shosetsu is later tempted into piercing Dami's earlobe with a knife. By making Dami imitate the "woman-head" and having Shosetsu pierce his ear, then contemplate the result while husband and wife gossip behind their mosquito net, Terakatsu recreates the scene which had occupied his fantasies since he left Kikyo. Overcome with grief and remorse, Shosetsu later apologizes to Dami. But Terakatsu has succeeded in bringing out in her, however briefly, that propensity to enjoy cruelty which is seen as present in all women.

He finally returns to Norishige's castle as its conqueror, burns it, and has Norishige and Kikyo spirited away to a hide-out where he can visit them. Here they live out their lives under strict guard, to prevent Norishige committing suicide. Kikyo both pities and loves his ugliness, and her love for Terakatsu disappears.

It's *grand guignol*, of course; and in the midst of the pain and perversion, as Tanizaki knows, the urge to laugh is never far away. The whole episode with Norishige's nose shows this, and the transformation of warrior into an incoherent gibberer is both tragic in its implications and comic in its appearance, down to the halting speech uttered by the deformed mouth.

*Arrowroot* is a take-off of the kind of historian Tanizaki had to become to write about Terakatsu. The Japanese for "arrowroot" is *kuzu*, and there is a distant mountain place called Kuzu, in Yamato Province east of Osaka, where, during the period of rival courts in the fifteenth century, the heir to the Southern Court, Prince Kitayama, known as the "Heavenly King", set up a court of exiles, and his courtiers, a domestic guard of the Northern Court's army, guarding part of the imperial regalia, a sacred jewel. The Heavenly King was finally captured and cut down by traitors, who beheaded him and buried the head in the snow. The legend was that in a battle the next day the King's head sprouted blood from beneath the snow, so the locals could see where it was and bury it. The narrator is planning a historical novel dealing with this episode, and his friend, Tsumura, who has relatives in Kuzu, persuades him to accompany him there for the local colour. They explore along the Yoshino river, finding swords, a drum, and old documents in a house where the owners still believe implicitly in the historical truth of their family papers and cannot regard them as legend. They are treated to a dish of ripe persimmons, pearls of dew in their hands "as though the mystery and the sunshine of the mountains had congealed on my palm", and discuss Tsumura's mother's *koto* and the playing of Osaka-style musical compositions.

It is at this point that the narrative takes on a deeper poignancy. Tsumura had been impressed by one of his mother's *koto*-accompanied songs, "The Cry of the Fox", in which a fox in human shape has to abandon her human child and vanish into the woods. The song speaks directly to Tsumura, whose mother had died when he was young, and he later has a gushy song similar to fox-song from a puppet-play: "Come and search Shinoda Forest's arrowroot leaves of sorrow".

Tsumura finds the Arrowroot (Kuzu) Leaf Shrine of Izumi, the harvest fox-god, and later sees the *Harvest Arrowroot Leaves* in which an abandoned father and son long for the

vanished fox-mother. The play moves him with endless yearning: "If she were a fox in human form, who could say that she might not again appear as his mother some day?"

In *Yoshino* and the *Thousand Cherry Trees*, the fox Gokuro takes on the human shape of Yoshino's retainer Tadanobu, so that he can be near the drum – called *Hatsune* – which his parent's skin has been stretched. Finding this drum in a remote village, "I feel", says Tsumura, "as though I have actually been drawn to Yoshino by the drum Hatsune." Tsumura then tells how his mother had been sold as a child into one of the pleasure districts of Osaka. He does not find her past dishonourable (it was an accepted part of country poverty in the 1870s – and later) and is more concerned to trace her evanescent image and find her family home. Her music practice book and some letters from his father and grandmother in Kuzu lead him to the farmhouse where his family had been paper-makers.

The narrator develops here a solidity that makes the tale exploration into the history of Northern and Southern Courts less substantial. Arriving at the family house, he finds a girl making paper. As he watches her fingers immersed in the cloudy water, he recalls a phrase from his grandmother's letter: "Our hands are cracked and chapped and our fingers are torn", and sees the girl's fingers are like this. An old woman in the house vaguely remembers his mother, and her *koto* is brought down from an upstairs store-room. It belonged, he is told, "to the one we sent to Osaka". So the drum, *Hatsune*, with its fox's skin, has in the end brought him back to his mother, and is no surprise to learn that, although one practices it now, there is a family tradition of being able to soothe foxes, and an Inari shrine in the garden.

The narrator had found his material then he could handle, but "of course" – Tsumura and the paper-maker marry. Like the paper itself, the story is woven from a great many strands: the almost total narrative of historical detail is followed by the summer exploration into the little-travelled mountain regions of Yamato; then the link with one of the oldest Japanese superstitions, the change into fox, with the play *Imagawa*; based on it, and the shrine named after the Arrowroot Leaf; and the ground reality, the harsh labour of farmhouses, the tragic, and the girl, longing for his dead mother. Besides the gradual revelation of this reality, the narrator's historical research is deliberately made to seem almost frivolous. Tsumura is the one who delves into the real past, and brings back love from it. The narrator has been pursuing literary froth.

Twenty-five years ago, when the *Makdoka Sisters* was first published in translation, Angus Wilson's foreword deplored the blurb's comparison with *Buddenbrooks* and with some aspect of *Anna Karenina*. It was, he said, "a tedious, claustrorobotic life of a heroines. In a sense, he was right. The Japanese war-time government reduced Tanizaki by invoking *Arden's* moral system on which Japanese "fired moral system on which Japanese life reposes", and said, "Tanizaki reproduced rather than suggested the tedious claustrorobotic life of a heroines. In a sense, he was right. The Japanese war-time government reduced Tanizaki by invoking *Arden's* moral system on which Japanese "fired moral system on which Japanese life reposes", and said, "Tanizaki reproduced rather than suggested the tedious claustrorobotic life of a heroines. In a sense, he was right. 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# Fine and curious masonry

Mark Girouard

H. M. COLVIN (General Editor)

*The History of the King's Works: Volume IV, 1485-1660 (Part 2)*  
266pp. HMSO. £55.  
0 11 670832 8

From the Middle Ages until 1851 the King's Works was in charge of the erection and maintenance of all royal buildings. A history of it was conceived in 1951, as a project which could be polished off in a few years. Thirty-one years later the last of six massive volumes has finally appeared. To state this is not to criticize, however. Considering the formidable quantity of source-material and the very great number of buildings involved, thirty-one years is a respectable length of time; the fact that so massive a project has been successfully brought to completion within it reflects the quiet persistence and enlightened management of the general editor, Howard Colvin.

The somewhat eccentric order in which the volumes have appeared is the result of the project's having been divided up in unequal portions among twelve authors, who have worked at different speeds. Volume IV, the last to appear, is the second of two volumes covering the period 1485-1660. The first was concerned with the organization and personnel of the Works in this period, and with the royal castles; the second deals with the remaining buildings. The period covered is one of contrast rather than consistency. It starts with the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, a time of intensive building rising, under Henry VIII, to a peak of royal production never before or since equalled in England - although George IV did his best. Then the reigns of Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth bring quite extraordinary inactivity, except in the realm of fortification. Finally, under James I and Charles I, royal building starts up again, though the period was more remarkable for conceiving ambitious projects than for realizing them.

Elizabeth's refusal to build is one of the curiosities of her reign. In forty-five years, during which most other European monarchs were furiously at work with trowels and mortar, she built a Long Gallery at Windsor, a canvas-and-wood banquet-house at Whitehall and, apart from fortifications, virtually nothing else of the slightest importance. It is true that she started her reign over-equipped with royal residences; but the fact that she largely resisted temptations to improve, rebuild or add to them, as they steadily grew out of fashion, is remarkable evidence of that closeness-with money which was at once her strength and her weakness. As a result, her direct influence on the development of Elizabethan architecture was minimal. In contrast, the early Tudors and Stuart monarchs were pace-setters. The achievements and importance of the Stuart Royal Works under Inigo Jones has been much written about, and Volume IV of the *King's Works*, although valuable for working out the complexities of royal building in the period, mainly fills out an already familiar picture. The most interesting, and largest, part of the volume is that which covers the activities of the early Tudors.

It is an extraordinary story, not least because so many of the buildings it involves have disappeared. Among the buildings that have gone, all as large or nearly as large as Hampton Court today, are Henry VII's palaces at Richmond and Woodstock; Henry VIII's palaces at Nonsuch, Oatlands, Bridwell, New Hall and Whitehall; and the great palace of Greenwich, the creation of both kings. To these must be added sizeable building works amounting in some cases to substantial new houses, at Baynard's Castle, Langley, St Augustine's, Canterbury, Dartford, Hanworth, Rochester and the Nore; a mass of embellishments at other houses; the vanished state-rooms of St James's Palace; and the magnificent rooms of the King's and Queen's sides of Hampton Court, largely replaced by Wren's new ranges.

In the seventeenth century. Moreover Henry VIII was every bit as prolific as a builder of fortifications. His work included a great belt of eighteen major and twenty-seven minor forts, stretched along the southern coast between 1539 and 1546; fortifications on the Scottish border, in Scotland and in France; and formidable town defences at places such as Hull, Portsmouth and Berwick.

All this work makes Henry VIII the dominant figure, if not the hero, of Volume IV of the *King's Works*. The great bulk of both the military and the secular architecture discussed in it is his. Henry VII started his reign with nine residences and added four; Henry VIII started with thirteen, and ended with fifty. The interesting point is made that he lived in an interim period. Earlier monarchs, in their peregrinations round the country, were able to park themselves on the great religious houses, many of them royal foundations, all equipped with lavish accommodation for important visitors. By dissolving the monasteries Henry VIII had greatly reduced his options, and had to fill the gaps himself. It remained for Elizabeth to discover that her richer lay subjects could take the place of the abbots.

There is something in this; but as the *King's Works* adds, Henry's houses were also evidence of his "tyrannical and acquisitive personality" and the fact that he was "a compulsive builder". In the Elizabethan *Description of England*, written by William Harrison, he is called "the only Phoenix of his time for fine and curious masonry", and a monarch, moreover, who knew how to build "after his own device". In 1532 the French ambassador reported how, whenever they came to any house of the King, "he shows it to me and tells me what he has done, and what he is going to do". In 1529 the joiners at Hampton Court are reported to be working on the King's privy closet under his personal direction "upon all such privy conceits which were devised there by his grace". To judge the end result of this is hard, because so much has gone, mostly without visual record. The situation would have been even worse but for one piece of luck. Philip of Spain, during his few years as King-Consort of England, decided to commission paintings of all his palaces, including the English ones. Accordingly the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyke was dispatched to England. The paintings have disappeared; but drawings of Whitehall, Richmond, Oatlands, Nonsuch, Greenwich, Baynard's Castle and Hampton Court survive.

When to these are added whatever else there is in the way of plans and illustrative material, the buildings that still stand and the mass of documentary evidence, the picture that emerges is a mixed one. Perhaps the dominating impression is one of profuseness combined with lack of discipline. With the one exception of Nonsuch, the palaces were huge and shapeless, were grouped round straggling big courts

and a confused warren of small ones. Splendid episodes were provided by elaborate towers or lanterns, or the magnificence of a hall, chapel or kitchen, but they were seldom related. From the point of view of architectural quality and inventiveness, the buildings of Henry VII - his chapel at Westminster, his tower at Windsor and his palace at Richmond - stand well above those of Henry VIII. If one early Tudor palace could be resurrected, I would unhesitatingly choose Richmond, in preference even to Nonsuch, curious and extraordinary though the latter must have been. In many aspects Henry VIII's palaces seem merely to repeat, in a less discriminating way, ideas and motifs inherited from his father. Architecturally their main achievement was to overlay the basic language of Henry VII's times with early Renaissance motifs. The resulting ornament could, to judge from what survives, be exquisite and probably expressed Henry VIII's particular enthusiasms; that huge and terrible man seems to have been at his best devising delicate incrustations for tiny jewel-like closets.

But as a patron and instigator of buildings, Henry VIII shows up best in connection with military architecture. Here again there is no doubt of his personal involvement, an involvement even greater than that with his palaces. In 1541 reference is made to his "most excellent knowledge in devising all kinds of fortifications", and again and again individual details are said to have been built according to his "device". His role is persuasively categorized as follows by the *King's Works*: "we must see the king not, certainly, as a draftsman, but as a copiously and deferentially referred-to expert".

His fortifications form part of a Northern European episode in the history of military architecture which was to be superseded by the new ideas being developed in Italy as they were built. They are, however, no less remarkable for the fact that they were so soon to go out of fashion. The dominant philosophy behind them was one of maximum fire-power for artillery. Forts like Walmer, Sandown and Deal were designed like complex double or triple flowers; but the petals of each rising circuit were built to bristle with the maximum number of cannon, cumulatively pointing in every direction. The result is not only of great interest to military historians, but visually captivating for the layman, especially as depicted in plan form or in the contemporary aerial views reproduced in the *King's Works*. The decorative value of the latter suggests that even at the time military architecture was supplemented by a delight which can only be called aesthetic. It leads one to wonder to what extent the complexities of the more fanciful Elizabethan or Jacobean buildings were inspired by Henrician fortifications. There is no very close analogy, because the functional requirements of forts and houses were so different; but a whole group of

houses, lodges or pavilions, of which Thorpe's design for a triangle house is the best known, show a similar delight in complex geometrical plans. An interesting step could have been provided by buildings such as the five banqueting houses, resembling a cluster of houses, which overlooked the tiltyard at Hampton Court and are shown in one of Wyngaerde's drawings. The combination of generous windows and semicircular bays and towers is suggestive of much Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture.

The evidence assembled in the book indicates a good few other possible precedents in vanished royal buildings both for non-royal early Tudor buildings and for Elizabethan and Jacobean ones. The sensational passage at Layer Marney, for instance, with its counterpart between the bay windows of the three-storeyed east and the eight storeys of tiny windows piled up in the turrets to either side of it, seems to reflect a similar arrangement on the river front of Richmond. If, as is possible, the tiny apartments were up on the second floor of the great central block at Richmond, a prototype emerges in the second-floor staircases of houses such as Hardwick. The heavenly prospect-room which rises above the roof-line of Melbury in Dorset suggests the inspiration of the central prospect tower at Oatlands. Elizabethan and Jacobean ornamental ceilings are essentially variations carried out in plaster of the fan-vault timber ceilings in Henry VIII's staircases. The Elizabethan log gallery is without any doubt a descendant of early Tudor galleries at Richmond, Hampton Court or elsewhere, the nature and dating of which is worked out for the first time in full detail in the *King's Works*.

Although the importance of the galleries as prototypes is also pointed out, in general the *King's Works* devotes little space to the stylistic planning background and influence of royal buildings. The illustrations, as previous volumes, are limited in number; and although these would have been much point in including photographs of the familiar exterior of Hampton Court and St James's, a comprehensive photographic record of the surviving interior detail in the royal buildings would have been useful to have. For the first time in the series the volume contains a short but interesting section on the contemporary planning of royal palaces, and the reasons behind it. But on the whole it, like its predecessors, is content with establishing the facts about the Royal Works as an organization, and working out what was built where and when and by whom. This reflects the interest of its editor, and he has the word "in concentrating their energies on the sufficiently formidable task of writing the history of the Works, the authors of this *History* have at least avoided the characteristic fate of co-operative books, which is not to achieve publication at all."

## The Beech

Blizzards have brought down the beech tree  
That, through twenty years, had served  
As landmark or as limit to our walk:  
We set among its roots when buds  
Fruitlike in their profusion tipped the twigs -  
A galaxy of black against a sky that soon  
Leaf-layers would that back. The naked tree  
Commanded, manned the space before it  
And beyond, dark lightnings of its branches  
Played above the winter desolation:  
It seemed their charge had set the grass alight  
As a low sun shot its fire into the valley  
Splitting the shadows open. Today that sun  
Shows you the place unscathed,  
A wrecked town centred by no spire,  
As the wind comes feeling for those boughs  
There is nothing now in the dark of an answering strength;  
No form to confront and to attest  
The amplitude of dawning spaces as when  
The tower rebuilt itself out of the mist each morning.

Charles Tomlinson

## Caravaggio

Howard Hibbard

A masterly and long-awaited volume that sets out to evaluate Caravaggio's unique qualities in the light of his contemporaries and predecessors. The author is primarily concerned with the authenticated paintings, although he also discusses the more important attributed works and includes recent discoveries of both paintings and documents. Containing all the contemporary documents about Caravaggio - in the original and in translation - as well as new interpretations of individual pictures and stages in the artist's career, this scholarly monograph will be considered the definitive study of Caravaggio's life and work.  
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The Artist's Other Self

Werner Spies

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# Prizes and their price

Martin Kemp

## JOSEPH ALSOP

*The Rare Art Traditions: The History of Art Collecting and its linked phenomena*  
691pp, plus black-and-white plates.  
Thames and Hudson, £30.  
0500233359 4

Organized collecting, which has come to embrace almost anything – from Botticelli to barbed wire – is one of man's odder obsessions. Joseph Alsop reminds us that far from being normal human behaviour our mania for collecting *objets d'art* has been shared by few other societies during the millennia of man's existence. With a strange combination of wry detachment and delighted involvement, Alsop emphasizes the "essential irrationality of human collecting" as a behavioural trait. The few collectors in the animal kingdom can be shown to do so for a purpose. The bower bird, for example, decorating its elaborately constructed nest with a collection of bright scraps, is advertising for a wife, and "a male bird that is a bad architect or negligent collector has much less chance of getting a mate". It is difficult to see any biological motive behind human collecting. Alsop does sow the idea that "the art market is to art as warehouses are to sex", but at least the energy expended in a warehouse is related to a biologically productive activity.

I don't wish to suggest that Alsop indulges in a crude knockabout, but he does attack his subject with uninhibited and provocative verve, making a series of large general points about the nature of collecting itself, in a way which art historians have been reluctant to do. At the same time, he loses nothing to professional historians in detailed documentation. Alsop, a

distinguished American journalist and political commentator who has passed his seventieth year, writes as an amateur in the best sense – bursting with enthusiasm, less circumscribed by the accepted, safe proprieties of orthodox art history than professional academics, and able to cast something of an outsider's eye on the whole system which constitutes art collecting.

He recognizes the characteristic practices of art collecting (which he differentiates sharply from art patronage) in only five civilizations: classical antiquity, China, Japan, Islam to a limited degree, and later Western art. These are his "rare art traditions". His peculiar and to my mind unsatisfactory title does not therefore mean "the rare-art traditions", but the "rare art-traditions" (compared to "normal art-traditions"). Or perhaps it means "the rare 'Art' traditions". He ambitiously aims to document in detail the rise of collecting in these traditions, to establish general criteria and definitions for the activity of collecting, to extract the features shared by the traditions, and finally to attempt a global explanation of the common factor which lies behind institutionalized collecting in such apparently diverse cultures.

This is, of course, an enormous task, and Alsop has found it necessary to produce a volume of approaching 700 pages, which he has armed with a bibliography of some 1500 items. Reading all these would be a Herculean labour for an academic on sublet. For a veteran journalist it is incredible. The author explains, however, that he organized a cottage industry of researchers, employing seventeen assistants, with Ulrich Middendorf as "presiding godfather". He also acknowledges the help of no fewer than 192 art historians, whose communications are held in his files.

Such an aggregation of borrowed learning sounds like a recipe for disaster, but somehow Alsop has held the whole thing together by the sheer force of his personality and attitudes. The structure of the book is like a great Victorian country house, replete with curious antiquarian details, rambling corridors, innumerable rooms decorated in a variety of styles, capacious closets, grand staircases and noisy plumbing, but ultimately well adapted to its complex functions and presenting an imposing spectacle when viewed from a distance.

Alsop's main thesis hangs on a series of "definitions", "laws" and "tests", all of which are sane and workable, even when his philosophical equipment is short of sophistication to handle the most tricky implications of the terms he uses. The most important of the premises on which he proceeds are as follows (but not in his order): "art collecting invariably prizes loose whatever is collected from its former functional context, and deprives it of significant social purpose"; "the potential usefulness of a work of art is never a serious consideration for a true collector"; "an art collector is concerned only with buying something for the production of which he has been in no way responsible"; "to be successful, an art collector must be a connoisseur, or must hire connoisseurship"; "art collectors' categories are created by collectors"; "the collectors' category is always controlling, since art collectors require their prizes to belong to the correct category"; And, summing all these in his general definition: "to collect is to gather objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy; and art collecting is a form of collecting in which the category is, broadly speaking, works of art". The primary characteristic of true collecting is "quite simply, that collectors enjoy it... for what mainly delights them is gaining possession of their prizes". If these definitions seem rather circular this reflects his view of the nature of collecting as a useless activity which is an end in itself.

Armed with these criteria, Alsop finds a common historical blueprint in his rare art traditions: "first, a special way of thinking about art", most notably in terms of the ideas of "Art" and "Artist"; "second, art collecting, art history and the art market; and third, the secondary byproducts of art", museums and related institutions, dealers, auctions, superlatives, forgeries, etc. The validity of this blueprint is obviously only as good as the evidence on which it is based. I suspect that most historians will by now have felt tempted to draw upon their arsenal of detailed information to knock holes in Alsop's edifice. After a few chapters I began to do precisely that, but as the historical progression unfolded so I was progressively if not wholly, disarmed by the wealth of substantiated evidence which the author has marshalled and by the force with which his case is stated. Occasionally a conclusion is reached with a bold confidence which the cited evidence does not justify, but the general level of argument is impressive.

The real test for this Western-orientated reviewer came with the chapters on the Renaissance and its aftermath, which comprise the most substantial sections of the historical exegesis. None of Alsop's large body of evidence is essentially new but he seems to have overlooked remarkably little of significance given the range of published material. The only sizeable topics I missed were the rise of prints as collectables, and artists themselves as a special category of collector. The main story is well told. He has brought a number of major personalities to life (only Savonarola is caricatured) making pungent observations and suggesting a number of new hypotheses. Not all his ideas are as secure as he would like, but they are never negligently formed.

It would, for instance, be nice and not implausible to believe that Niccolò Niccoli was the pioneer collector of classical objects as early as 1390-1400, and Alsop does his best to make his argument stick, but a good deal of retrospective pleading is involved.

There is no doubt, however, that the acerbic Niccoli was in at the basement of antique collecting. The famous *calcedonia*, admired by Ghiberti, entered Niccoli's collection for five florins, left it for 200 and was valued at 1,500 in Lorenzo's magnificent posthumous inventory – a gain of 300 per cent in less than a century. There is also some uncomfortable stretching of evidence in his eulogistic promotion of Cosimo de' Medici to such a point of unrivalled eminence in the history of Renaissance collecting, but here I am prepared to go a good deal of the way with Alsop. The problem with the evidence is not simply the lacunae, but that many of the documents that survive are being pressed to yield information and support analyses of a kind which are generally inconsistent and often in conflict with the rationale behind each document's original compilation. The famous and much-exploited 1492 inventory of the Medici Palace is a conspicuous case in point.

In common with other commentators, Alsop makes great play with the modest valuations of Renaissance art compared to the classical antiquities and even utilitarian items. Only one painting, the "Adoration of the Kings" attributed in the inventory to Fra Angelico, is valued as high as 100 florins, while the Tazza Farnese, an antique sardonyx cameo, is recorded as high as 10,000 florins. A number of important paintings (in modern auctioneers'argon) are estimated at no more than a feathered with two pillows. Alsop takes these valuations as accurately reflecting the relative value placed on Renaissance and antique art by even the most enlightened patron-collectors. Yet, this is to fail to recognize what the document can properly tell us in relation to its original function.

What it tells us, no more and no less, is the realizable financial value of an enormous assembly of diverse items in the opinion of the compiler(s) of the inventory. It deals with the estimated market value of the objects, not with a graded scale of the relative importance, significance, aesthetic worth or non-financial value placed on the items by their Medicean owners. Nor does it indicate the amount paid by the patron to the artist. Alsop's idea of the inventor(s) combining the components records of the Medici Bank for the original cost of almost a century of family patronage is faintly absurd. The value of 20 florins each for Pollaiuolo's great *Hercules* paintings in the Sala Grande should not be taken as their original cost or as an indication that Lorenzo would have happily swapped them for a couple of cloaks, but that the re-sale value of second-hand paintings, probably built into their surroundings, was low. There simply was no developed market, prospective purchaser of a major picture could expect to order a tailor-made work from the best master available to him, and there was no shortage of supply in fifteenth-century Florence.

Classical objects were exorbitantly expensive not only because they were appreciated and fashionable, but because there was a finite supply and only a very few objects in the top category. Is it so very different from the gap between a top Velasquez portrait (\$5,400,000 in 1970) and a commissioned Hockney?

Any discussion of such matters inevitably becomes entangled with questions of aesthetic worth and artistic value. Who can honestly say that a picture does not look different when we are shown that it is a worthless forgery? Our aesthetic judgment of an object is continuously and irredeemably compromised by what we know about it. Art history plays an important role in all this. Alsop reminds us how much less valued in every sense was the "Apollo Belvedere" once the distinction between Greek original and Roman copy had been formulated in the nineteenth century.

A prestigious list of top-name old masters, as certified by "those who know" has become a necessity for any gallery which aspires to international stature. Hence the Boston Museum of

Fine Art's ill-fated desire to possess a Raphael. Such a desire dates back to the Renaissance itself. As early as the 1470s Giovanni Ruellai was boasting for his sons' benefit of the major masters whose works he possessed (a reference in Ruellai's *Zibaldone* which Alsop laboriously underlines) Isabella d'Este in 1498 asked to borrow a Leonardo portrait to compare with examples by Bellini (an incidence overlooked by Alsop). This is evidence of her precocious interest in the individual styles of Renaissance masters, and is all of a piece with her willingness to waive her normally strict stipulations about subject in her efforts to obtain a Leonardo and a Bellini. Similarly, her son, Federico Gonzaga, was determined to obtain a Raphael but was fobbed off with an Andrea del Sarto replica. Paintings began to be suitable gifts on an international scale a topic which has eluded Alsop's attention. Most remarkable is Cardinal Bibbiena's 1518 gift of Raphael's "Giovanna of Aragon" to Francis I, not because the French King wanted a portrait of that particular sister but because it was a picture of a supreme Italian beauty by the supreme Italian painter of beauty.

Arising from such detailed matters is the general question: "Why these fine art traditions and not all the countless others?" The answer Alsop hazards, warning that it "is the best I can do", is that "the nourishing cultures of the fine art traditions have alone shown evidence of what may be called a developed historical sense". But I feel I am admitting what I did not expect to find. It is a good deal of admitting why did these particular cultures develop a special kind of historical and artistic awareness?

I suspect that one of the preconditions of both the production of historical writing and consciousness of art as Art is the rise and consolidation of a substantial professional, administrative, secularized, "civil service" class, for whom analytic history is a vital support, whose existence as professional and social functionaries depends upon a conviction that the pattern of human affairs is susceptible to rational analysis and some measure of prediction. The professional elite is buttressed by its sense of intellectual understanding and high literacy, which tends to foster a matching sense of style and culture marks of its virtue.

I do not mean this in a crude, determinist manner, or that such values can only arise in this way, but that the concepts of history and Art as shown to have social functions in such a context, and collecting becomes a less wholly pointless than Alsop is at pains to emphasize. Collecting can be seen to have links with individual's sense of his place in society, as well as satisfying an urge to create, whatever aesthetic and psychological liches may exist. It can go further than this. The great American collectors, whose activities have undoubtedly coloured Alsop's definitions of collecting, are not only asserting their financial power, but cultural status through their collections, but also investing in posterity. Just as the Medici hoped to buy external exaltation from the site of usury, so the Mellons are bidding for place in the immortal gallery of artistic benefaction. The collections enjoy the valuable and real as those for which they were originally created.

Any group of professional academics will probably react uneasily when an outsider intrudes robustly into one of their fields, particularly when the outsider's work transcends the accepted norms in its presentation and aims. And there is no shortage of antagonistic features in Alsop's work. It is eccentrically planned, with a series of "interchapters", and no least references to the plates. It evokes a strong sense of the author's personality and contains a greater amount of first-person writing than is normal in historical analysis. It is crisscrossed with incidental and tangential material. And it does not always seem longwindedness and repetition. But it did find it thoroughly enjoyable, and warmly welcome the bold challenge it has laid down.

## THEATRE

# Peasant realities and poetic myths

John Elsom

## J. M. SYNGE

*Collected Works*  
Edited by Robin Skeelton  
Volume 1, Poems  
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411pp, £13.75 (paperback, £4.75).  
0 86140 135 2  
Volume 3, Plays 1  
202pp, £9.75 (paperback, £3.95).  
0 86140 136 0  
Volume 4, Plays 2  
394pp, £13.75 (paperback, £4.75).  
0 86140 137 9  
Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe.

## TONI O'BRIEN JOHNSON

*Synges The Medieval and the Modern*  
209pp, Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, £9.50.  
0 86140 104 2

J.M. Synge's plays, admittedly few in number, were written within a span of under ten years. He began his apprenticeship effort, *The Moon has Set*, in 1900; and died in 1909, with *The Riders of the Sorrows* left unrevised. He had little previous experience of the theatre, even as a spectator. His diaries for the 1890s record only two visits, to see Beerboom Tree's *Hamlet* in Dublin in 1892, and *Ghosts* at Antoine's Theatre Libre in 1898. Like many of his contemporaries, he disclaimed the commercial theatre "with its stultifying vulgar characters".

This lack of a stage background made the surge of creative energy all the more remarkable, for in those nine years Synge became not only a fine, painstaking and innovative dramatist, but a practical man of the theatre in other ways too. He could visualize a

scene in great detail. When W. G. Fay, the Abbey Theatre actor, asked him about a passage in *The Shadow of the Glen*, "Was Dan standing where he is on the right, behind the table?" Synge replied, "No, he was on the right-hand side of the table with his hand on it. Such advice is rarely asked from a dramatist, and more seldom still accepted."

Although he had, according to W. B. Yeats, "a kind of narrow intense personality", and always retained an aloofness, Synge immersed himself in the Abbey's affairs for months at a time, seeking seclusion only to write his plays. In 1906, as an Abbey director, he opposed the move to transform the Irish National Theatre Society into a municipal theatre on continental lines. In a perceptive memorandum to Yeats, he distinguished between a "creative" dramatic movement "where the interest is in the novelty and power of the new work rather than in the quality of execution" and "a highly organized interest lies in a more and more perfect interpretation of works that are already received as classics".

That distinction still holds good; and, more particularly, it reveals that Synge knew the strengths and weaknesses of the Abbey company, that he did not want them to be seduced into a premature rivalry with the major European repertory companies and that he was drawn towards the new wave of literary theatres, which had spread across Europe during the previous twenty years. These theatres included the Théâtre Libre, the Freie Bühne and the Court Theatre under Granville Barker; and they were renowned not for their patriotism but for their independence and realism. While some Abbey colleagues aspired towards providing a cultural flagship for the Irish nation, Synge pulled in another direction. Yeats likened the impact of Synge's plays to that of Ibsen's in the 1880s; and it is a tribute to Synge's strength of character, and to

the support he earned from Yeats and Lady Gregory, that the company stood loyally by him in the furious rows which developed over *The Playboy of the Western World*.

In England, however, we do not readily link Synge with Ibsen, or the Abbey Theatre with the Théâtre Libre; and the realistic side of Synge's writing has been overshadowed by the tougher, urban naturalism of O'Casey. We prefer to remember the melodious lyricism of his dialogue, as if it were a higher form of blarney; and the delicate mixture of fable and observation, and tragedy passes us by. Synge did not pursue beauty like a butterfly hunter. "A dramatist," he said to Yeats, "has to express his subject and to find as much beauty as is compatible with that, and if he does more, he is an aesthete."

The fascination of this new four-volume edition of his works is that for the first time we can see how all the different elements in Synge's writing were brought together. In addition to providing much previously unpublished material, including *The Moon has Set*, fragments of early verse plays and several scenarios, it contains different versions of poems or speeches from plays, culled from Synge's notebooks, so that we can feel the processes through which he worked to discover his distinctive voice.

It is like wandering into a chemical laboratory and if we are at first bemused by all those tubes and pipettes, an accompanying critical study by Toni O'Brien Johnson, *Synges the Medieval and the Modern*, provides an extremely useful account, without contradicting, the prevailing view that Synge's meeting with Yeats in Paris in 1896 and his subsequent visits to the Aran Islands to learn Gaelic, from 1898 onwards, gave the spur to his later endeavours. Synge's interest in folklore began before then, with his studies at the Sorbonne under two professors of medieval literature, Henri d'Arbois

de Jubainville and Louis Petit de Julleville; and their influence directed him towards certain recurring themes, such as the beheadings in *Bricur's Feast* (and in its English variant, *Sir Gavain and the Green Knight*), which subsequently affected the conception of *Playboy*, a modern, comic version.

Synges went to the Aran Islands not as a Gaelic revivalist but as a medieval scholar, not as a nationalist seeking his roots but as a French or even English folk historian. Once there, as his celebrated collection of essays reveals, the beauty and simplicity of the place and its inhabitants won his love; and although he was never blind to the poverty, deprivation and injustices of western Ireland, he sometimes describes the region almost as an Eden before the Fall, which in his case meant the sprawl of urban industrialization. He revelled in the athleticism of the girls, in the colours of the cloths and, above all, in the story-telling; but he was never so intoxicated by a William Morris-like dream of crafts and fair, complexities that he forgot to describe how a drop in the price of kelp could reduce towns and villages to starvation. His political observations, such as they are, in both *The Aran Islands* and *In West Kerry*, err on the side of practicality rather than polemic.

Johnson also illustrates how Synge discovered and developed that rich dialect which he uses to such perfection in his plays and which startled Yeats by its unfamiliarity. In part, it was the result of straight imitation: Synge always claimed that some of his most startlingly poetic phrases had been borrowed untouched from the islands. But it was also the attempt to seek a hybrid between Irish, "a noun-centred language", and English, which is not. Some of the more characteristic elements of the dialect come from the desire, conscious in Synge's case, to seek English equivalents for Irish usages. Synge's contribution was to enhance the musicality of what could otherwise have seemed a merely cumbersome use of language.

But clearer illustrations of his developing style come from Synge's poems and translations, which begin the bibliography by David H. Greene and Edward M. Stephens, which Skeelton commends in his introduction. But the results are worth the labour. The study is an invigorating one, of a writer whose technical preoccupations, social vision and historical concerns merged into one clear stream of activity, if only for a few brief years.

# Striving to impose

Ronald Hayman

## RONALD SPIERS

*Brecht's Early Plays*  
224pp, Macmillan, £20.  
0 333 28855 6

GRAHAM BARTRAM and ANTHONY WAINE (Editors)

*Brecht in Perspective*  
231pp, Longman, £5.95.  
0 582 49205 X

The first line of Brecht's third play, *In the Jungle of Cities*, is: "If I read the sign right, this is a lending library." The librarian, Garga, is willing to lend books to the Malayan timber merchant, Shink, but not to sell his options. How seriously are we to take a book called *Brecht's Early Plays* if it describes Garga as a bookseller?

Certainly a study of the early plays was badly needed, though a close analysis of the five plays written between 1918 and 1925 – *Baal*, *Drums in the Night*, *Jungle*, *Edward II* and *Man is Man* – might have been more valuable than a book which spreads its net so wide. In 188 pages (not counting the notes) Ronald Spiers goes much further, offering a penultimate chapter on *The Threepenny Opera*, and then, as well as a final chapter called "The 'Lendright' and Beyond". This contains feature-like and often unhelpful generalizations about such plays as the one he sometimes calls *St Joan of the Stockyards* and sometimes *St Joan of the Slaughterhouses*.

Dr Spiers is right to reject Ernst Schumacher's narrow-minded Marxist reading of his early work: it is an obstacle to any understanding of these plays in their own terms and in relation to the views he held at the time of writing them. But this does not exonerate Spiers from considering the exonerate Spiers from considering the early revision of the texts. The Brecht Archive in East Berlin, his

best chapter is his introduction, which makes some useful comments on *The Bible*, the short play Brecht wrote when he was fifteen. The introduction also shows a good understanding of the young Brecht's exertions to impose himself on everything and everyone around him. In 1920 he wrote in his diary: "I wish all things to be handed over to me, including power over all animals, and give as the reason for my demand the fact that I am only present once."

But during the war, the schoolboy Brecht who wrote patriotic journalism for the Augsburg newspaper was not as single-minded as Spiers makes him out to be, and it is disappointing that Spiers devotes less than 13 pages to *Baal*, a play crucial to an understanding of the early Brecht. The points made in the introduction, which draws on the diaries, could have been developed in relation to this, the most autobiographical of all Brecht's plays, though each successive revision made it more impersonal. The original play (1918) directly reflects Brecht's close relationship with his mother. He rewrote it in 1919 and again in 1920-22. In 1926 he tried to do away with its subjective element, looking at events as they might have been reported in a newspaper. He re-titled the play *Life Story of the Man Baal*.

Spiers is wrong, I think, to sidestep this question of revision, which is central if we are to understand how Brecht functioned as a playwright. His scripts were never finished. He constantly tested them out on friends and the most casual of acquaintances, encouraging suggestions and incorporating the best of these into revisions. It is true that, as Spiers writes, "Brecht's later revision of his texts stemmed from his changed ideological position in the interim." His Marxist "corrections" of his early work are an obstacle to any understanding of these plays in their own terms and in relation to the views he held at the time of writing them. But this does not exonerate Spiers from considering the early revision of the texts. The Brecht Archive in East Berlin, his

*Baal*, to be called *The Evil Baal*, the *Assault Man* was a Marxist; the Brecht who wrote *Life Story of the Man Baal* was not. The work was done at the beginning of 1926 for a production by the Junge Bühne, and it was only at the end of the year that Brecht, frustrated in his work on *Joe Fleischhacker* and *The Downfall of the Egoist Johann Fattzer*, started to read *Das Kapital*. (In the informed opinion of Hans Eisler, he never got beyond the first volume.)

Spiers has also contributed a chapter on "Brecht in the German Democratic Republic" to *Brecht in Perspective*, edited by Graham Bartram and Anthony Waine. Their purpose, they say, is "to furnish material for the understanding of Brecht as a historical individual, reacting to the major political and social events and ideological currents of his time and working within particular theatrical and aesthetic traditions". So long as it did not obscure the extent to which he was working against theatrical and aesthetic traditions, such a book could have been valuable, but Brecht's playwrighting was rooted in his balladry – one of his basic ideas for *Baal* – based on Villon, and songs are integral to nearly all his plays – so I think it was a mistake to leave out the question of his relationship to poetic traditions. The book contains some useful chapters on the historical background, but Brecht's theatrical precursors are treated mainly in an 18-page chapter which is too much like a textbook summary. Max Spalter's book *Brecht's Tradition* is still the best source on this subject, and the author of the chapter does not even list it in his bibliography.

On April 14 Methuen will be reprinting James K. Lyons's *Brecht Brecht America* (408pp, £5.95, 0 413 51063 3) in paperback. D. J. Enright reviewing it in the *TLN* (January 16, 1981) wrote that of Brecht's "exile" years in the United States Lyons "tells us all... or even more than all" in some departments, drawing on unpublished letters and documents, FBI files and interviews.

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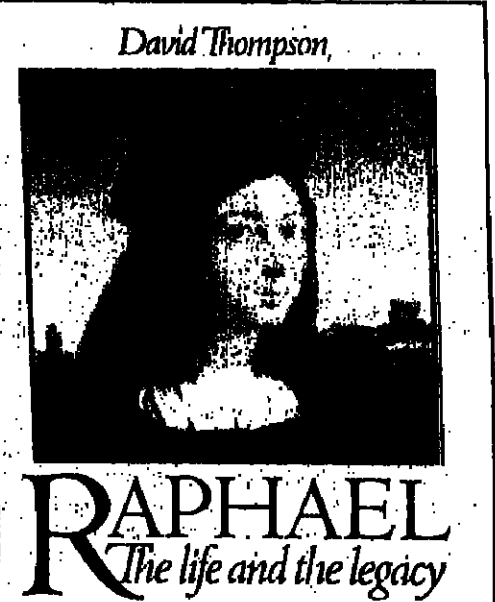
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## commentary

### Business interests

Peter Kemp

The South Bank Show:  
R. K. Narayan  
LWT

The *South Bank Show's* film about R. K. Narayan found his surroundings as fascinating as he does. Unable to keep away from them for long, it continually broke off its interview with the novelist to plunge into the teeming streets of his home city, Mysore. This was appropriate since, in his books, Narayan's imagination repeatedly does the same. His mind never tires of roaming round the city - the "Malgudi" of his novels. For him, it is - as he explained here - "a very inspiring place", partly because of its visual splendour, which the film handsomely captured, but more because of its stimulating jumble of life. "I keep looking at these things and it makes me happy to be a writer", Narayan declared as the camera threaded its way through the crowd in the bazaar, peered into booths, dawdled over bright pyramids of ground spices, and nosed out appealing oddities like a sign advertising "New Decent Electrical Hair Dressers". What he most values about Mysore, it seems, is that "You're closer to your characters here." And for Narayan, this film stressed, character is the starting-point of fiction. "You see the shop-owner," he announced. "He'll give you a story. He'll talk to you."

The example was telling in more ways than one. Narayan's stories generally emerge from the world of work, as their titles often advertise: *The English Teacher*, *The Guide*, *The Financial Expert*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs*. He has made a vocation of prying profitably into other people's businesses. It is hard to think of any novelist in England since Arnold Bennett who has shown so wide and so minute a concern with the ways in which people earn their living. Narayan is like Bennett in other ways, too. Responsive to environment, he is also alert to the effects of time. In Mysore, this film made clear, these things come together: the environment is packed with instances of change or resistance to it. The interplay between the traditional and the progressive that so frequently informs Narayan's books was apparent everywhere: cars and

cattle jostled in the streets, booths offering Xerox facilities were set alongside garish drawings of Hindu deities.

Narayan doesn't adjudicate between ancient and modern any more than he pronounces verdicts on his characters. An intrigued abstention from criticism typifies his work: as he explained to the interviewer, "When I appreciate a character, I don't exercise any judgment of moral values. For me, they're just interesting psychological specimens. They're interesting as they are." But, despite his imaginative gregariousness, his novels can be rather melancholy. Incidents in his life likely to have fed this were quietly nestled by the programme: his removal from the rest of the family to be brought up in his grandmother's house where he was "a very solitary child"; the loss, after only five years of marriage, of his young wife. Prone to ending with separation, his books often contain characters who show a sobered but not dispirited resilience in the face of loss or disappointment.

A sense of human solitude is something Narayan shares with Graham Greene - who was responsible for the publication of his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, by Hamish Hamilton. Speaking on the programme about his at first reluctant reading of the manuscript, Greene recalled that it "enchanted" him. What made its charm particularly irresistible, perhaps, was the book's concern with schools and fathers - always matters of intense significance to Greene. In fact, Narayan's father was, like Greene's, the headmaster of a school his son attended. Narayan briefly became a teacher, too; and he spoke with chuckling dismissiveness about his incompetence in the classroom. He was weak on discipline, he said. As a writer, though, he's now strong on it. Hard work ensures his easy prose. A five-hundred-word passage, he pointed out, would take him an hour to write in the first draft, but three hours in the second, and six in the third. To display what is achieved by this carefully calculated revision, a page was shown on the screen as Narayan read aloud his early draft of it. Rather a novelty in television coverage of literature, this focusing on a text proved to be highly informative. It's a technique that might valuably be added to the repertoire of other literary programmes.

### Oil and untroubled waters

J. K. L. Walker

Local Hero  
Odeon, Haymarket

Two-thirds of the way through *Local Hero*, Bill Forsyth's new comedy about the efforts of an American oil company to buy up a remote Scottish village as the site for a new refinery, there is a scene in which a bright silver disc is seen moving across the evening sky, lit up with a salmon-pink sunset that casts glimmers from sea and sands across which struggles a crowd of villagers. Within seconds the illusionistic image is resolved into the lights of a helicopter bearing in Happer (Burt Lancaster), the eccentric comet-watching boss of Knox Oil, on the last stage of his journey from Houston. The visual analogy with the sci-fi mysticism of such films as *Close Encounters* - the god come from the machine to unravel the earthlings' tangles - is almost the only portentous touch in a film which, like the much-praised *Gregory's Girl* (also written and directed by Forsyth), makes its impact from acute observation of the comic potential of the everyday.

*Local Hero* is borne along on this current of comic inventiveness. Great events hang not on great causes but upon the contingent, upon whim, chance, unlikely personal affinities. MacIntyre (Peter Reiger), the young, anxiety-ridden junior executive of Knox Oil, who is seen in the film's

opening sequences driving to work in downtown Houston in his Porsche (used to get migraine headaches when I drove a Chevy") is chosen to fly to Scotland to negotiate the deal because of his supposed Scottish ancestry, but in fact is of Hungarian descent. Such situations flower in the clear dry air of Forsyth's wit; the lines are delivered poker-faced (as in Tat's films, no one laughs). Running gags are cut in to great effect: a rabbit, guiltily cosseted by MacIntyre and a Scottish colleague in the village hotel after being struck by their car is ironically reintroduced at lunch by the hotel's proprietor, Urquhart (Denis Lawson). MacIntyre, slave to the quiescent telephone kiosk for his stumbler reports to Happer in Houston on the state of the Scottish night sides, is liberally supplied by the villagers with the necessary tonnage of oil, as well as with offers to repaint the kiosk in the colour of his choice - for the Ferness inhabitants are only too willing to desecrate their heritage for their share of the Knox millions; Victor the Russian, ashore on one of his regular visits from the Murmansk fishing-fleet, agrees that his hands have been sensibly disposed by Urquhart in the short-term money market during his absence.

Like a pointillist canvas, the film is built up of such comic touches, arguably, though, the shape that emerges is less happy. The Houston Mission workplace, make it less than a satisfactory marriage with the Scottish sequences, partly because the jokes stem too predictably from cliché

### Against the Under Toad

David Profumo

The World According to Garp  
Various cinemas

As a book John Irving's *The World According to Garp* does not seem inherently cinematographic; it is a complex of different plots covering a long time-span, and in a highly literary manner contains other texts within it. But Steve Tesich's screenplay proves that this sumptuously long novel can be distilled, and the result is a film that is admirably close in spirit to the original book, though generally gentler and less shocking. The action is realized through a kind of mosaic structure, a montage of many short scenes that combine to form a vivid picture of an imaginary world cut up according to its own rules.

The saga opens in 1944, when an unmarried nurse, Jenny Fields (played by the inscrutable Glenn Close), displays her baby to her own bewildered parents. "Garp" Sounds indignantly. Jenny explains the infant's origins, and his faulty dead-aid allows him (and us) to hear only the single word "ejaculated". It is not until Jenny is installed as matron at the exclusive Steering School that we hear details of the remarkable Garpogenesis in full - the boy is named T. S. Garp after his sire, a fatally wounded but permanently erect tailor whom Jenny mounted on his hospital death-bed in order to conceive without the prospect of any subsequent attachments. From the start, the resulting child is an endearing, quirky character, but it is hardly surprising that he begins to "think weird thoughts". It is a film debut for James McCall as the boy Garp, and, like the other important juvenile performances in the film, his acting is completely free from cuteness, and his intelligent portrayal eases Robin Williams's subsequent assumption of the role.

But it is Williams's interpretation of Garp as a young man that is central to the film's success. As we follow him through his school days, loves, and literary aspirations, it is clear that his is an essentially childlike temperament. Unashamedly sentimental, enthusiastic for life's variety, naïf but brilliantly perceptive, a mixture of crinkle-eyed good humour and

passionate outrage, Garp often himself as an archetypal role, one that Williams brings to life with outstanding charm, blending the muscular presence of a wrestler with preppy good looks and offbeat intelligence.

Married to his blue-stockinged sweetheart Helen (Mary Beth Hurt), Garp's critically successful literary progress is suddenly overshadowed by the success of his mother's feminist autobiography, *Sexual Slapper*, which turns Jenny into a national cult figure, "the bastard son of Jenny Fields". Massive royalties allow Jenny to continue her campaign to beat the world of the lust she diagnoses as pandemic, by setting up an elaborate centre for disturbed women; her houseguests comprise a comic collection of misfits, including Robert Muldoon, the gentle of a henchwoman and transsexual ex-wife, and the Philadelphia Eagles, acted with sparkling sympathy by the excellent Joan Lithgow.

The world that accords to Garp's life of surprises, but the hero takes them in his stride. Comic extravagance is perfectly absorbed by Williams, who invents a mime in the States. But there are strong elements of pathos in the plot too, family deaths and disasters which affect Garp deeply, and Williams admirably controls these alternating aspects of his character, preventing them from deteriorating into the mawkish. Garp's tenderness towards his sons is particularly affecting, for the strong sense of children's apprehension of things is fundamental to his own perspective: a world judged by his love of the young. It is also a world in which sick people abound - rapists, assassins, male drivers - and they are responsible for the phenomenon that young Walt call "The Under Toad", a misnomer for the underworld that threatens him when swimming, but which succeeds in rendering the foreboding underworld of the story.

Garp is a film that proceeds by cumulative effect, short stretches of dialogue, and a pattern of great circularities. Certain recurrent motifs - speech and silence, the fear of flying, the activity of wrestling - have been skillfully picked out from very dense novel. For the arrangement of the wrestling scenes we have to thank himself to thank; he features a cameo role as a referee.

There is time in between the light in this very witty film to wonder how much of a conservationist message Forsyth is trying to put across. No much, one suspects, given the tone of the film. It would be interesting to know, though, who is the local hero in MacIntyre, the Hungarian? Is Happer, whose megalomaniacal looks to the stars and needs clean air to see them? Or Ben Knox (Paul MacKay), the local whose refusal to let his stretch of beach animates Happer? Or Urquhart, the burglar, and the shrewd modern Scot, who is just one of the modern Scotland needs - according to any rate, to the Highlands and Islands Development Board?

David Benedictus has written a novel based on Bill Forsyth's screenplay *Local Hero* (144pp: Penguin, £1.50, 1400 6660 8). Other recently published books relating to the filming of books include *Filmed Books and Plays 1982-1981* by A. G. S. Enser (Bapp, 1982, £6.95, 0 566 03475 1) which includes English language films by title, and titles changed from the original and supplements Enser's *Filmed Books and Plays 1928-1974*. *Filmed Books and Plays 1928-1974* by D. R. Griffiths (Theatrical, 1982, £4.95, 0 351 24 334 9) which was screened in seven parts on the BBC in 1981. The latest collection of Harold Pinter's screenplays also prizes *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Langbath*, *Go Down* and *The Last Tycoon* (277pp: Methuen, £4.95, 0 413 48680 X).

## commentary

### Collective responsibility

David Kelley

ALFRED DE MUSSET  
Lorenzaccio  
Olivier Theatre

The row of pikes which threatens the audience as, at the end of *Lorenzaccio*, the young Duke Cosimo de Medici is crowned in succession to the assassinated Alessandro, makes grimly clear the decision taken by John Fowles and Michael Bogdanov to present of Musset's play written in the aftermath of the French revolution of 1830. Musset would probably have approved, for actuality of appeal is one of the basic principles of the French Romantic drama, defined by Stendhal in his *Racine et Shakespeare* as a theatre directed at the present customs and beliefs of a people, in opposition to Classicism, which is directed at our great-grandparents. And indeed, the nineteenth-century Florence in which the play is set is clearly used to a considerable extent as a metaphor for the France of the 1830s.

In fact, *Lorenzaccio*, perhaps more than any other work of the period, makes explicit the social and political commitments and reverberations of the Romantic *mal de siècle* as it was experienced in France by the writers of Musset's generation. The Lorenzo de Medici who, in 1537, assassinated his tyrant cousin, is here clearly a cynically disillusioned idealist of 1830. Having been inspired, as a naive young intellectual, with the idea of ridding the world of a tyrant, in order to reinstate moral purity in the city and to fuse within himself the realms of dream and action, he has felt obliged to become his own pander in order to gain his audience. To achieve innocence he has adopted the mask of the *débauché*. But knowledge of the ways of the world undermines his faith in the possibility of the absolute he is striving for. And these absolute values which are his goal are precisely those which are perceived to have been irrevocably undermined by the social and political upheavals of 1789 and its aftermath. Lorenzo is convinced of the futility of action, but nevertheless feels the desperate need to act.

It is this personal existential drama which is the aspect of the play most underlined in John Fowles's

adaptation. Indeed, in the important scene which closes the first part (III, iii in the original text), in which Lorenzo defines his intentions and motivations to Filippo Strozzi, the jarring mistranslation of "orgueil" as "vanity" trivializes the whole issue. But in the cutting of the long speeches in which Lorenzo reveals his inner conflicts, there is doubtless a deliberate and justifiable element of choice. For this is, in terms both of form and content, the aspect of the play which is most dated. In his introduction to his adaptation in the *Guardian* of March 14, John Fowles remarks on the problems posed for modern English actors by the "full fine flow of unmediated Romantic prose", as found above all in Lorenzo's "tirades". Moreover, although we may not fully have come to terms with the problems of the loss of faith in absolute values confronted by the Romantics, we have learned, since Sartre, to pose them differently. If God may no longer be in his heaven, that need not necessarily lead to despair. Or rather, as Orestes affirms in a play about political assassination which it is difficult not to compare with *Lorenzaccio*, *Les Mouches*, life could begin on the other side of despair.

But it is also this personal drama which defines the ambivalence of political attitudes implicit in Musset's play. In the panoramic view of Florence which is offered, the most striking effect of Alessandro's tyranny is the erosion of moral values - the city has become a brothel. But this is a direct result of the illegitimacy of power. Alessandro is both a bastard and a puppet of the Empire and the Papacy. The latter no longer constitutes a guarantee of infallibility. On the contrary, in the person of the sinister Cardinal Cibo, it engages in complicity with the prostitution of morals in the blatant pursuit of temporal power. Within the terms of the play the Republic is proposed as the answer to this problem. And indeed, in terms of sixteenth-century Florence: the Republican oligarchy constitutes the historical legitimacy of power, usurped by the Medici. In 1834, the government of Louis-Philippe may indeed appear as the usurper, illegitimately picking the fruits of the revolution of 1830. But in so far as Lorenzo's assassination is systematically defined as a wedding night, is an attempt to restore absolute moral values, those values cannot be represented by French republicanism,

which first overturned them. Implicitly the nostalgia is for the absolute and legitimate monarchy of before 1789.

In view of this implicit contradiction, political action, for the Musset of the 1830s, must be futile. And his *Lorenzaccio* is the possibly tragic statement of that futility. But these are not the issues which confront us in the Britain of 1983. However unpleasant many of us may find the reign of Margaret Thatcher, we cannot accuse it of illegitimacy. In this sense, the ennoblement of Lorenzo's specifically Romantic dilemma in John Fowles's adaptation allows a positive refocusing of the play. The sub-plot concerning the Strozzi family is brought to the fore. The play becomes, Fowles suggests, a critical and stimulating debate of two vital but contradictory questions: Can anything justify social apathy and the untold suffering it ignores? Can anything justify the act of violence and the untold suffering it precipitates?

What is most impressive about Fowles's adaptation is that in spite of the modification of emphasis it retains the rhythm and economy of the original. *Lorenzaccio* is well-known as a play which it is impossible to perform as it was written. Conceived for the armchair rather than for production, it is both extremely long and involves an enormous number of scene changes. But, perhaps because he was writing for the theatre of the mind rather than for the stage, Musset's play is extremely difficult to cut. Whereas in a Molière or a Shakespeare play it is possible to lose a scene here and there without destroying the dramatic coherence of the whole, *Lorenzaccio* is written as a totality. The kind of adaptation practised for the original production in 1896, with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role, in which the first act was almost entirely suppressed, the play ending with the act of assassination, and in which the order of those scenes retained was arbitrarily manipulated in order to accommodate the lavishly illusionistic décors, was clearly an aberration. Although his version is shorter by about a third than the original, Fowles has eliminated very few entire scenes, and tampered very little with their order - the bringing forward of one or two of the later scenes is, however, an overall interpretation of the play, since it takes the emphasis off Lorenzo's individual action and focuses it on the collective responsibility for action. What is powerfully maintained is the rhythmic

interaction between the panoramic view of Florence, the development of the various sub-plots - the insult to Louise Strozzi and its repercussions, the seduction by Alessandro of Ricciarda Cibo - and the gradual revelation of the hero's personality and project. Interestingly there is little if any causal relation between the sub-plots and the main action and their dramatic effect upon it is both to heighten tension and to retard revelation, so that the significance of Lorenzo and his plan only gradually emerges from the complex and tangled skein of the play.

This is something that works very powerfully in Michael Bogdanov's production. The dramatic rhythm is integrated into the whole texture of the presentation, into the use of the set as much as the acting. The admittedly impressive décor, dominated by the decapitated "David" of Michelangelo, seems at first too abstractly symbolic in its evocation of the atmosphere of the city of Florence, and too grandiose for the more intimate scenes, such as the sinister confrontation between Ricciarda Cibo and her confessor the cardinal. But the closing in, towards the end of the first part of the play (III, i) of the scene on the blood-red bed in which the bloody marriage between Lorenzo and Alessandro is to be consummated, hints at the accelerating intimacy and variety of set in the second part, as the knot draws tighter.

Similarly, at the beginning of the play Greg Hicks, as *Lorenzaccio*, is unimpressive. But as it progresses it becomes clear that his initial understatement of the part is in the logic of the drama. The force of the character, in his contradictions and ambiguities, gradually emerges from the insidiously self-effacing role he has adopted, until in the final confrontation with Alessandro, whose arrogant and sensual masculinity and stupid vulnerability are admirably portrayed by Clive Arrindell, he has acquired the dominant stature demanded by his status as hero of the play. Further to pick out strengths and weaknesses in the acting would perhaps be invidious. To function with the force of the National Theatre production, *Lorenzaccio* demands an overall quality in which individuals do not stand out. If, as Sir Peter Hall has suggested, the National Theatre exists to put on supposedly unplayable masterpieces, it has won its wager and earned its keep, with *Lorenzaccio*.

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## Behind the lines

Robert Hewison

The twelfth London Book Fair opens its doors on April 6. This is the only major international marketing event that concentrates on books in the English language. It says something about the disillust state of the British publishing industry that this important trade promotion is in fact run by a private company.

Lionel Leventhal, of the Arms and Armour Press, and Clive Bingley, now a consultant, first set up the fair in 1971, in order to catch American and other foreign visitors passing through each Autumn on their way to the huge officially sponsored jamboree at Frankfurt. Few small publishers have the resources to take a stand at Frankfurt, nor, for that matter, do they have the sales organizations in this country that enable them to compete in their special areas with the large publishing houses. The idea caught on, to the extent that in 1982 the fair cut loose from the timing imposed by Frankfurt, moved to the Barbican Arts Centre, and established itself as a Spring event in its own right.

The emphasis on the small publisher, however, remains, and it is noticeable that Longmans, Macmillan, Penguin, Thames and Hudson, and Weyland are not taking part. On the other hand, Bee Books New and Old (with just five titles on bee-keeping), Alison Hodge, from Boswell Farmhouse, near Penzance, and the South African Institute for Race Relations are. In all, some 500 exhibitors (including the TLS) have taken a stand this year, and from April 6 to 8 they will be displaying their wares to an expected 10,000 people.

With the move to April and the Barbican (which saw a doubling of attendance figures) the international aspects of the fair have become the most important, with expanding sales of books and publication rights to Scandinavia, Holland, West Germany and the United States. But the fair remains an important opportunity to sell to librarians and booksellers in this

country, and the April date helps the selection of Autumn stock.

The London Book Fair remains a closed "trade" event, although a breed known as "academics" are allowed in at half price. Next year's plans include proposals for an open day when the general public will, as at Frankfurt, be allowed in. If this happens it will be a sign that the publishing and bookselling industry is beginning to recognize that if it is to compete with other "leisure industries", it must do more to market its product, instead of relying on the uncertain free publicity of book reviews. The Publishers' Association's Book Marketing Council is a step towards this, but the book trade needs a broader-based organization - with a bigger budget.

One of the minor absurdities of choosing twenty authors to promote as "The Best of Young British Novelists" (a Book Marketing Council Scheme) was to include among them an author it was almost impossible to promote: "Alan Judd". How do you promote a personality who writes under a pseudonym, and whose photograph cannot be published for security reasons? The ban is so complete as to exclude him from the specially commissioned group caricature.

The mysterious "Alan Judd" is a charming man, by definition below the age of forty, whom I met at a promotional party for the Young Novelists. He was wearing A. N. Wilson's identification tag. The reason for his anonymity is his present work for the Foreign Office, and the "sensitive" nature of his previous activities in Northern Ireland. But surely all this talk of security would only serve to attract the attention of a cultural attaché, say, at the Russian Embassy?

Judd's novel, *A Breed of Heroes*, published in 1981, describes a tour of duty by a paratrooper battalion in Northern Ireland. The author's biography at the beginning of the book says that Judd served in the army in

Northern Ireland, and it is not difficult to connect him with the character of the slightly disaffected, Chet Thoroughgood, a Sandhurst-trained officer who previously had been to Oxford. (Unlike his hero, however, Judd is not "tall, red-haired and freckled.")

The Oxford connection gives a clue to Judd's real identity which the blurb biography does not. Another pointer comes in Judd's contribution to the special *Young Novelists* anthology published by *Granta* magazine. Unlike the other nineteen, Judd has no photograph or biographical notes in the volume. But his short story concerns the rehearsal of a student production of *The Changeling* in Lincoln College, Oxford. Our cultural attaché, reaching for his *Who's Who in the Secret Service* (Moscow, 1984), would discover that another pseudonymous author, John Le Carré, also went to Lincoln College. Le Carré also subsequently worked for the Foreign Office, and he has recently been quoted as saying that the model for George Smiley was, if anybody, his tutor at Lincoln, V. H. Green. Captain Robert Nairac, murdered while doing undercover work in Northern Ireland, was also at Lincoln.

Curiouser and curiouser. And, as it happens, "Judd" and "Le Carré" are both published by Hodder and Stoughton. But before the fantasy becomes too elaborate, it is important to check. Posing as not-the-KGB, I asked Hodder and Stoughton if Judd had been to Oxford. Yes indeed, was the reply, but not to Lincoln College. Mind you, they didn't say which college he did go to. Has anyone any cast photographs of student productions of *The Changeling*?

The Arts Council's Literature Panel now faces a dilemma of its own making: what to do about the results of a special conference it held last month to discuss the Arts Council's Writers' Fellowships scheme. These showed that, far from being a failure, the scheme has proved, if anything, too much of a success.

The Literature Department has been funding residencies for "creative" writers in educational institutions since 1974. At present there are nine writers each receiving £7,750 a year in exchange for contributing to the cultural life of various schools, teacher training colleges and polytechnics. Their duties are vague, but they usually include running creative writing classes, assisting with the production of a local magazine, and acting as an impresario for other visiting writers. The more successful the Fellow tends to be, the less time he has for his own writing. (The Scottish Arts Council and some Regional Arts Associations also fund residencies.)

Since the Writers' Fellowship scheme has been the subject of both

internal and external investigations (respectively, by Alan Brownjohn and the Writers' Guild) the Literature Department invited a hundred past and present beneficiaries of the scheme, plus other interested parties, to discuss ways in which the Fellowships might be improved. The results of the discussions were remarkably unanimous: the Fellowships were so good that there ought to be a lot more of them, and a lot more places. Speakers complained that the scheme was too narrowly based on educational establishments, and cathedrals and supermarkets were both mentioned as possible locations for writers in residence.

The conference concluded with a formal resolution calling on the Arts Council to set up a representative working party, and to make a substantial increase in the number of Fellowships. What will the Literature Department do now? Having spent some £2,000 on inviting people's opinions, it can hardly ignore them. But a working party would be a concession towards those who call for a democratization of the Council's deliberations. A tenfold increase in the number of residencies (such figures were mentioned) would solve any of the little problems the Literature Department has in spending its budget. Josephine Falk, Deputy Literature Director, is preparing a report on the conference for the Literature Panel and she assures me that the issues raised "will not be swept under the carpet".

L. FUKS.

Marstrand 3, 7384 CK Wilp, The Netherlands.

### Among this week's contributors

ABIMED AL-SHAHI is a lecturer in Social Studies at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

LOUIS ALLEN's *The End of the War in Asia* was published in 1976.

REYNER BANHAM's most recent book, *Scenes in America Deserts*, was published last year.

ALAN BARNARD is a lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh.

KETH BOSLEY's collection of poems, *Stations*, was published in 1979.

JOHN ELSOM is the editor of *Post-War British Theatre Criticism*, 1981.

ALAN FORREST is the author of *Society and Politics in Revolutionary Bordeaux*, 1975.

MARK GIBBARD's books include *The Return of Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, 1981.

JOHN LEE (1783-1866) of Hartwell, Buckinghamshire, antiquary, patron of science and advocate of various social reforms: whereabouts of MSS, photographs, etc for a commemorative exhibition and booklet.

H. A. HANLEY, County Record Office, County Hall, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP20 1UA.

THOMAS H. GLADSTONE, author of *The Englishman in Kansas* (1857): information sought about Gladstone's life and writings.

Martin Crawford, Department of American Studies, University of Keele, Keele, Staffs ST5 5BG.

ROSELYN HALL (1880-1943), author of *The Well of Loneliness*, reminiscences, anecdotes, etc of her and her friend Una Tyronebridge, for a commissioned biography.

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Herbert G. Smart, 65 Shelley Crescent, Heston, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 9BH.

Margaret Elise Harkness, ("John Law") (1854-7), Socialist novelist

and historian: author of *A City Girl* (1887); *In Darkest London* (1891); *A Curate's Promise* (1921); information on date and place of death and personal reminiscences.

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# The totalitarian seducers

James Joll

KARL DIETRICH BRÄCHER

Zeit der Ideologien: Eine Geschichte politischen Denkens im 20. Jahrhundert  
414pp. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.  
3 421.06/149

For the past twenty years social scientists have been announcing the end of the ideological age and have drawn some comfort from the fact, since if the divisions in the world are purely political rather than ideological it might be possible to end some of them. In fact, as Karl Dietrich Brächer shows in this ambitious, wide-ranging and provocative book, the opposite has happened and ideologies have become secular religions so that the resulting conflicts are no bitter as any caused by earlier sectarian quarrels.

Professor Brächer has written a history of the last eighty years in terms of the recurrent ideological conflicts and the emotional attitudes produced by the political and social changes in twentieth-century Europe. It is not a history of political philosophy and there is little discussion of abstract topics such as sovereignty, equality or justice: the work of John Rawls, for instance, is barely mentioned. It is rather an analysis of intellectual and emotional reactions to the problems raised by what Brächer calls "the grosse Auseinandersetzung zwischen liberalen und totalitären Demokratie-begriffen, die unser Jahrhundert bewegt". This confrontation between democracy and totalitarianism is the main theme of the book. Brächer starts with a clear and straightforward account of familiar topics—the crisis of liberalism at the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of a new irrationalism and a new racialist nationalism, the origins of Fascism and the impact of the Russian revolution—and he shows how the experience of the First World War transformed what before 1914 had been intellectual concepts into practical political mass movements.

There were in fact, Brächer argues, three answers to the problems of the post-war world: Marxist Communism, Fascism and National Socialism, and liberal democracy. At first, it looked as though it was liberal democracy which had triumphed: the democratic systems of Britain, France and the United States had survived the strains of war, the liberal ideals of President Wilson seemed to be about to provide the basis for a new liberal international order. Yet not only did the attempt to apply the principle of the national self-determination of peoples create its many problems as it solved and contribute to the nationalist resentments which underlay the various fascist movements of Europe, but also the failure of democratic governments to solve the social and economic difficulties of the 1920s and 30s created a mood of self-doubt, and *Kulturpessimismus*, which led to a loss of nerve among democrats everywhere, to the advantage of their totalitarian opponents.

For all the differences between fascist or authoritarian dictatorships and communist rule, Brächer believes that nevertheless the similarities are of profound importance, not just in the practical consequences for the inhabitants of communist and fascist states, but because each type of system demands complete submission to a totalitarian ideology and an all-powerful state. These similarities, Brächer thinks, can be partly attributed to "the political nihilism of the idea of progress" and to the contradictions in the ideological heritage of the two great inspirers of modern political thinking: Rousseau and Hegel. For many of the believers in progress, progress can only be the result of a violent overthrow of the existing system whether by war or revolution, and such violence is necessarily fatal to the progress it is supposed to serve. Hegel believed that progress was the realization of freedom, but that freedom could only be realized within an all-powerful, all-demanding State. Rousseau's belief in the virtues of the noble savage contributed eventually to the move-

ments which were to undermine the stability of industrial society and bourgeois democracy, while the idea of the general will underlies the worst totalitarian systems, however hypocritically it may be invoked.

Much of this is familiar from the work of J. L. Talmont and others, but Brächer uses his earlier detailed researches into the origins and nature of the National Socialist state in Germany to give telling examples to reinforce his arguments and to show how Hitler's régime was the final expression of many contradictory earlier movements:

What descended on Europe was not only the intellectual "Revolution of Nihilism" but also a cleverly instigated "Revolt of the Masses" inspired by resentment against the modern world and described as the antithesis to the *Kulturpessimismus* from which it sprang. . . . In Hitler's struggle against the "racially inferior" and the Jews, in his scientific and technological policies of destruction of those "whose fault it was" . . . western civilization with all its contradictions was itself to be struck down.

Just as the First World War, fought by the Allies in the name of democracy and peace and by the Germans in the name of a higher *Kultur*, failed to produce the better world which it was hoped would follow, so the results of the Second World War were equally discouraging. Although Brächer sees a hopeful attempt to reformulate and reinvigorate democratic theory in Karl Popper's *The Open Society and its Enemies*—"a declaration of war on the great ideological dogmas, on closed systems of thought . . . against the totalitarian seducers and despots"—reinforced by the "sketches of a philosophy of freedom" by thinkers as different as Karl Jaspers and Isaiah Berlin, thirty years later the battle still has to be fought all over again. "The

strength and attraction of monolithic thought", Brächer writes,

is clearly linked to the need for great goals and emotional values in politics. A longing to transcend the compromises and predominantly material considerations which determine the politics of pluralistic democracies is above all growing in the industrial states, whose elementary needs are partly satisfied, partly pushed to the limits of growth. There are signs of a new romantic idealism. Whether this will be mobilized or whether the weight of the warnings of the historical experiences in the century of totalitarianism will be enough to keep it within bounds is hard to predict.

Brächer has found that his earlier analysis and investigation of National Socialism was reinforced by his experience of the violence of the student revolt of 1968 and the new ideological trends of the 1970s. As a result he finds himself close to those old liberals in America who have become neo-conservatives. His conclusions are therefore pessimistic: "Socialism with a human face" has, he believes, shown itself to be an illusion; authoritarian nationalism ends in the horrors of National Socialism. How can "a pluralistic democracy with its constitutions and rules of the game" hope to safeguard humane values without damaging them in the process? The question is left unanswered except in so far as Brächer believes that a struggle for political values must be a struggle about political methods and practice in which it is the means alone which will justify the end.

Brächer has written a history of ideas in the twentieth century which presents a lucid argument free from obscurantism and jargon. He largely succeeds in making sense of the shifting and contradictory changes—changes of mood as much as of theory—of the past twenty years by drawing attention to

the parallels between the forms of our own *Kulturpessimismus* and that of the 1920s. He leaves out many of the writers of whom he disapproves on ideological grounds, dismissing Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave or Jayaprakash Narayan, for example—and the political effects on the example and reforms very seriously. Yet for all his emphasis on the practical and empirical he does not face one of the fundamental problems of twentieth-century politics, in that he says nothing about the economic structure of our society or the attempts that have been and are being made, for instance by social-democratic governments, to ameliorate it.

The sense which many people have in the 1980s that Western society is in some sort of dead-end comes not merely from disillusionment about political doctrines but also from the structure of the capitalist system and the sense that our choices are often as limited by the policies of large corporations as they are by the policies of governments. Moreover, the economic orthodoxies of earlier decades, notably those deriving from Keynes, which seemed to enable Western societies to overcome some of the weaknesses of the capitalist system, do not seem to be working any more. And, at least in Britain and the United States, the adoption by conservative governments of a new doctrinaire economic theory may well produce practical hardships and injustices likely to be more disruptive of the stability of society than vague discontent about the workings of democratic institutions. Liberal democratic systems still have in many countries to solve the problems of economic injustice; and it is their failure to do so which makes people believe that only a revolutionary change can improve their lot.

Any writer of a general account of political ideas and attitudes in the twentieth century finds it hard to relate the experiences of the developed countries to those of the Third World

and occasionally Brächer seems to neglect both the indigenous contributions to political thought of the non-European countries—the ideas of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave or Jayaprakash Narayan, for example—and the political effects on the imperialist countries of the loss of their colonies. Terrorist methods originated by nationalist movements in the struggle against foreign rule (notably not just a feature of our own time, as it was after all nationalist terrorists who in June 1914 started the crisis which led to the First World War) have been taken up by other international movements with many different goals. Sometimes this is the result of a sense of guilt about the colonial past as well as a desire for intense political sensations, a kind of political drug-addiction among the young. How far is this new phenomenon the result of the complex effects of the end of European empires? It is perhaps a question which at least merits consideration. Although Brächer conscientiously says something about developments outside Europe and North America—in Latin America and elsewhere—he does not really discuss the ways in which older European ideologies have become transformed when applied to very different societies.

The experiences of the twentieth century have been so varied, its ideologies so shifting and contradictory, its prophets—Max Weber or Oswald Spengler or George Orwell, for that matter—so often both right and wrong that it is hard to write a work of synthesis which really holds together. This Professor Brächer has undoubtedly done. Those who do not agree with all his political assumptions will at least find themselves forced to think again about their own, and every reader will profit from his familiarity with a wide range of political and sociological literature and his original insights into the nature of our century.

## All volunteers together

Barbara Goodwin

PATRICK RILEY

Will and Political Legitimacy: A Critical Exposition of Social Contract Theory in Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel.  
276pp. Harvard University Press.  
\$30.50  
0 674 95316 9

The idea that governments should be based on the consent of the people is now a cliché. Western political ideology has developed a rhetorical vocabulary of terms such as "political obligation", "legitimacy", and, crucially, "the will of the people" which refer back to metaphysical concepts of the individual, free will and reason. All this, thanks to the theories of Hobbes and Locke, designed precisely to show that society should be regarded as if based on a contract by which people voluntarily surrendered their "natural freedom" in exchange for the protection offered by a government, whose laws they thereby committed to obey. This account provided safeguards against autocracy and refuted the cynic's view that government is based merely on force.

Patrick Riley proposes not "to defend contractarianism as an adequate political philosophy" but to show the "voluntarist metaphysics of morals" that underpins it. His focus is therefore the will, for it is—according to the free-will contractarian tradition—only by voluntary action, analogous to promising, that we acquire political obligation.

Yet Riley finds fundamental weaknesses in the pivotal concept of will employed by contract theorists. Hobbes frequently used the term to denote "the last appetite" preceding action, but if choices are merely psychologically determined, the will cannot be a "moral cause". With Locke too, similar problems arise when he equates the will with desire, although natural law plays a stronger

part in his theory, independently imposing moral duties on us. Neither theorist gives an account of the will adequate to support the weight of political legitimacy. So much for English contract theory, which may, as Hegel suggested, derive from transferring "the character of private property into a sphere of a quite different and higher nature".

Riley's sympathies lie with Hegel, Rousseau and Kant, who offer a less mundane, more satisfactory "voluntarist metaphysics". Despite their differences they are comparable because "all three strive to combine the importance of will with a rational, universal content". Rousseau, for example, urged that in a direct democracy the "general will" should make decisions. The general will is "that which wills the common good" and individuals must subordinate their personal interests to it. But, as Riley says, the general will is a mere metaphor since willing is essentially personal and Rousseau fails to reconcile private desire and public duty convincingly. Riley shows that although Rousseau's aspiration for the political systems of antiquity, based on common good, was inconsistent with the fashionable aristocracy of a state based on individual consent, none the less his endeavour to amalgamate the two perspectives influenced both Kant and Hegel.

Riley's designation of Kant as a contract theorist is curious. What room is there for consent in a philosophy which commands duty for its own sake? But Kant's moral theory structured his political aspirations. "The good will" acts on the basis of maxims which, applied universally, preserve the dignity of men as "ends in themselves" and moral enlightenment would eventually realize Kant's utopia, a republic where all were treated as free and equal and consented to laws, or else were subject to laws "worthy of consent". Riley therefore considers Kant a covert contractarian: legitimate laws—and states—are those which rational people would, if asked, consent, because they are congruent with

morality. However, for most theorists in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, such hypothetical consent is unacceptable, being a likely camouflage for dictatorship.

Hegel—the *bête noire* of such theorists—is explicitly opposed to contractarianism. His *Phenomenology* traces the historical rise of the subjective individualism which inspired contract theory and culminated in the "catastrophe" of the French Revolution. By contrast, Hegel believed that contemporary states embodied universality and objectivity. Hence, the role of the individual will was to acknowledge the state's rationality and to transcend subjectivity by participating in the state's "ethical life". While Riley thinks Hegel's conception of the will too passive, he calls his solution to the individual-state problem, the identification of will with reason, "truly brilliant, truly original".

Riley overcomes the problems inherent in a comparative study with expertise and elegance. He gives each thinker his due of close textual analysis, while developing his own critique of contractarianism. His argument usefully explicates the unresolved tension in Western thought between what is right (or good) and what is willed (or desired). In practice, liberal democracy equates these by defining what people say they want as good. Its champions denigrate those who define good otherwise and those who say they have even done what we ought to. They have even compiled a secular Index of "totalitarian" thinkers who wish to impose a "real will" against people's expressed will, which includes Plato, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx and most utopians.

The dispute concerns differing criteria for political rightness. As Riley says, "while voluntarism took care of legitimacy, it could say nothing about the intrinsic goodness of what is willed". From the contractarian perspective, if Hitler was elected, how could the choice be judged wrong? In practice, bills of rights usually constrain popular preference within

some humane politico-moral framework—a liberal compromise. In theory, however, the only guarantee that "the good" and "the desired" will necessarily coincide is a solution such as Hegel's, which detaches from individual free will.

Riley's study also raises the problem of the "paradox of democracy". How can I want one thing and yet concur when the majority chooses another? Again, the theoretical solution comes from the "continental" philosophers, while liberal democrats content themselves with majoritarianism plus concessions for conscientious objectors, fearful of the disguised authoritarianism of a "general will" solution. Although Riley does not address this problem directly, his analysis illuminates the debate.

Despite such difficulties, contemporary theorists like Rawls and Walzer treat the contract metaphor as unproblematic, and build on it, but contribute nothing to the theory of the will as a moral quest which Riley requires. He examines which dismisses existentialism as a possible radical explication of voluntarism because Sartre ultimately believes that moral responsibility should condition men's self-defining choices. Riley concludes that contractarianism still awaits a coherent account of the relation of will to political legitimacy. Yet the classic contract arguments still merit critical consideration for, although born out of uncompromising individualism, they are at the heart of the people's myth of "the will of the people" which can justify deception and atrocities, if by politicians or modern "social contract" which seems to demand unlimited compliance from the citizenry. A polemical exposure of the manipulative force of current contract theory, consent theory would be salutary. But in ideal terms, as Riley says, consent theory expresses a desire for freedom and equality. There is also need for a new theory of political legitimacy which promotes the good and does not reduce the ideal of consent to mere acquiescence.

COLIN JONES

Charity and 'Bienfaisance': The treatment of the poor in the Montpellier region 1740-1815  
317pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£25  
0 521 24593 1

Charity and 'Bienfaisance' is yet another valuable book on eighteenth-century France by a pupil of Richard Cobb. No one can be expected to emulate the reckless *parache* and imaginative writing of the master, but Colin Jones conforms to Cobb's standards of massive archival coverage and shares his humane outlook and sceptical distrust of the sort of establishment history which rams human beings into categories and forgets their individuality; he writes, moreover, a clear and workmanlike prose.

According to Napoleon, the business of the historian is "to carve the past at the joints". The task has been judiciously done in drawing the limits of this study in both space and time. Though the documentation comes chiefly from the charitable institutions of the town of Montpellier itself, Dr Jones has chosen to include the whole "region", the modern department of the Hérault—in *ancien régime* terms, the dioceses of Agde, Béziers, Lodève, Montpellier and Saint-Pons. The inclusion of barren mountain areas and textile manufacturing localities depending on the water power of the hills makes it possible to have wide-ranging discussions of economic circumstances, to study migratory

labour and vagabondage, and to compare the impact of the legislation of the central government on country areas as against the town. Chronologically, the account runs from 1740 to 1815, which makes possible a crucial comparison between the achievements of the *ancien régime* in looking after the poor and those of the Revolution, a subject which Right and Left, Catholic and anticlerical, have long debated in France.

Léon Lallemand's *La Révolution et les pauvres* (1898) was an indictment of the failure of successive revolutionary governments to alleviate misery—because their anticlerical policies had ruined the old Christian charity, and the utopian theories of the Enlightenment proved to be as incompatible with human nature as they were irrelevant in times of crisis. Subsequently, the charitable work of the *ancien régime* has been the subject of some outstanding historical writing; after Camille Bloch (1908) and various local historians, culminating in J. P. Gutton (1971), came an Anglo-American take-over with Olwen Hufton's splendid *The Poor of Eighteenth-Century France, 1750-1789* (1974) and Cissie C. Fairchild's *Poverty and Charity in Aix-en-Provence, 1640-1789* (1976). By contrast, until recently the history of the poor in the revolutionary period has been neglected; then, in 1981, came Alan Forrest's slim and cogent volume, *The French Revolution and the Poor* (1981). (Forrest, another pupil of Cobb, pays tribute to the help he received from Jones, a genial example of cooperation between historians engaged in a race to publish.)

## Defying the Revolution

Alan Forrest

Donald SUTHERLAND  
The Chouans: The Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770-1796  
360pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
£25  
0 19 82259 2

"As a movement", states Donald Sutherland emphatically, "*chouannerie* has no history". It produced no coherent philosophy or campaign of counter-revolution, no dramatic military losses for the Republic. Rather it consisted of isolated, morale-sapping attacks on Republican officials, guggings of purchases of national lands, nocturnal raids on army posts, and humiliations of constitutional priests. Like royalism in the Midi after *Thermidor*, it blended uneasily into the world of banditry and highway robbery. Yet it was also a specifically Breton movement, drawing its support from the villages of rural Brittany and making use of local topography to defy the Revolutionary state. Perhaps for this very reason *chouannerie* has tended to become obscured by its own mythology; the *chouan* is still frequently portrayed in essentially literary terms, as the romantic hero of Balzac's novels, the brave royalist diehard slipping unseen into the protective mists of Michelet's *bogues*.

It is Sutherland's aim to rescue the *chouans* from the folklorists. In this he might seem to be applying to Upper Brittany the economic and social models deployed by such historians as Bataillon, Fauriol and Tilly to analyse the departments of the West, all of whom, though in differing ways, produced images of peasants driven to revolt by political injustices explained in terms of the growing urban market economy. But he effectively demonstrates that such models are inapplicable to a Breton countryside where there were few towns, where the textile industry was well-established, and where village households were long-integrated into the professional men rather than alien intruders from the commercial towns. Here, unlike the north, there can be no question of

turn to the old nobility for leadership. The *chouans* spoke the language of the rural community and represented its threatened values, whereas the Republic, with its military demands, its constitutional priests and its national ideology, could only seem foreign and menacing.

In his final analysis, Sutherland's interpretation is neither social nor economic nor strictly political. It is primarily cultural—what explains why there was no obvious class division between *chouans* and republicans, why both could appeal to wide sections of the community. This is a thesis consistent with what we know about peasant politics in the nineteenth century, emphasizing the traditional cohesiveness of village society and the suspicion which greeted ideas emanating from the outside. The author has done more than simply add another piece to the expanding jigsaw of provincial history during the French Revolution. He has helped to place rural revolution in its cultural context, to reconcile the Revolutionary climacteric with the world of peasant traditionalism.

For a deep-seated sense of tradition and community characterized the Breton countryside, and when the state intruded into village life it was liable to arouse resentment. It is no accident that the greatest upsurge of *chouannerie* followed the attempt in the spring of 1793 to recruit a reluctant peasantry into the armies. Religion, too, was an integral part of the local culture, part faith, part superstition, a simple belief in curing saints which bound the people to their parish priests, especially in times of uncertainty or disaster. It is for this reason that the Civil Constitution caused such bitterness for the imposition of a constitutional cure was well-established, and where village households were long-integrated into the professional men rather than alien intruders from the commercial towns. Here, unlike the north, there can be no question of

## Relying on the Welfare

John McManners

The poor of eighteenth-century France, it seems, have become something of an English monopoly. They were not politically or ideologically significant, they were not an identifiable class or denizens of a particular *milieu*; they were a pathetic collectivity retrospectively defined only by the fact that, whether because of illness or accident or unemployment, bad weather or crop failure, they were on the verge of starvation. In *A Sense of Place* (1975), and more especially in the essay "A View on the Street: Seduction and Pregnancy in Revolutionary Lyon", Cobb himself describes why they are worth studying and what we seek to know about them. He assumes, he says, that "the death from hunger, even of a poor woman, 200 years ago, is in itself important", and around the margins of judicial and administrative proceedings (and in *Death in Paris*, from lists of the clothing of suicides fished out of the river), he looks for the assumptions and conventions of popular collective behaviour, the venues of sociability and "the camaraderie of the street", the people's ideas of what constitutes an obligation, their reticences and their pride, "*les politesses et les pudeurs of the very poor*".

In his two most attractive chapters, Jones contributes essays along the lines of this formula—one chapter describes popular attitudes towards charity, and the other attitudes towards medicine. Briefly, he finds that the poor hated charitable institutions and distrusted doctors and all in authority. Broth and a tankard of wine (if you could get them) were better than all the

physician's remedies. Independence, in whatever discomfort, was better than depending on hand-outs from officialdom. If they had to be supported, let it be by their own kin, or by secretly given charity—say, from the *cure*.

The English historians of the poor have their specialties. Cobb's is "sociability". Professor Hufton's economic circumstance ("the economy of makeshifts" by which they stayed alive at all). Jones is essentially the historian of official attitudes. As his title implies, he is contrasting the Christian "charity", which was the theory of the old monarchy, with the *bienfaisance* of the revolutionary ideal (a term coined by the abbé de Saint-Pierre, popularized by Voltaire and becoming the watchword of the Comité de Mendicité of the Constituent Assembly from January 1790). In his pages we read the sad and picturesque chronicle of the ramshackle charitable institutions of the *ancien régime*. We catch glimpses of the great paternalistic mood—the two dozen notables around the green-felted table under the chairmanship of the bishop and in the shade of portraits of benefactors, presiding over the *Hôpital Général*; the great ladies of the town who ran the *Miséricorde's* manifold organizations of home help. We catch glimpses of the poor in their misery: the infants with one chance in five of surviving on their way to wet nurses in the mountains, the queue at the *Prêt Gratuit* (the religiously organized pawnshop); the sisters at the *Hôtel-Dieu* overfeeding the patients and preventing the doctors getting access to them for research; the police running in anyone in rags and without documents when the government offered a bonus for every vagabond incarcerated in its new *dépôts de mendicité* and—a proud example—the *White Penitents* in 1723 positively forbidding the *Hôpital Général* to assist its members, a task it proposed to keep within the confraternity. Throughout, in contrast to the story so often told by local historians, Jones gives statistics—of the aims, of numbers of inmates, of financial arrangements, of bequests in wills and so on.

The Comité de Mendicité of the early days of the Revolution saw *bienfaisance* as meaning state intervention and direction, with as much help as possible given in the home, while two kinds of institution would cope with intractable cases—one to provide work for the unemployed, another to discipline the idle. In view of these theoretical objectives, Jones entitles his section on the years 1789-1795 "Towards the Welfare State". What actually happened makes gloomy reading (he cites Alfred Cobban, "whoever won the Revolution, the poor lost"). As examples one might cite the inadequate votes of money by the government (replacing abolished revenues) in February 1792 and August 1794, the collapse of nineteen of the forty-three hospitals of

the region, the uselessness of the "citoyennes dévouées au service des pauvres" who in some institutions replaced the nuns (while wards were renamed after revolutionary heroes, or after revolutionary virtues, with "Courage" reserved for the operating theatre). Oddly enough, all the examples of disaster given above come in Jones's next section, "The Retreat from the Welfare State, c.1795-c.1800"—does this chronological displacement reflect a subconscious wish on the part of a remarkably impartial historian to try to allow *bienfaisance* rather better marks than it deserves?

The last chapter of the book (conclusion excepted), "From the Concordat to the Restoration", covering 1800-15, is the most original, and certainly will be new to the English reader. Its rich detail defies summary, but briefly speaking, nuns and confraternities came back, "Christian" alms-giving revived, authority promoted charitable institutions which were "tangled, discrete, and unambitiously pragmatic", resembling "the limited reform endeavours of the Ancien Régime monarchy"; the allocation of a specific tax (*an octroi*) gave these institutions a chance to operate under the direction of local notables, but with the central government exercising iron control through the prefect. The Church played its part, but was no longer in charge of charity; the government in a tentative and not very generous way had taken over. The medical profession at least was satisfied—the nurses were now subject to the doctors in the hospitals.

Jones does not take sides in the old controversy concerning the charitable policies of the *ancien régime* as compared with those of the Revolution. With a wealth of local detail, ranging from economic trends to the exigencies of war, from the complacent assumptions of bureaucrats to the proud and fatalistic assumptions of the poor, he makes what happened on either side of 1789 understandable. His book is an illustration of the fact that, in the last resort, eighteenth-century France can only be understood in detail through its provincial history. One hopes that the poverty which has descended on our universities will not bring to an end the pilgrimages of young English researchers going off (as Colin Jones must have done ten years or so ago), falling in love with some corner of France, and being touched by the absurd, the heroic determination to return again and again, living on fleecy rice and cheese and coffee, and lodging in garrets, until the archives, the streets and the rolling countryside have yielded up the secrets of their history.

Volume Seven of selections from the *Annales Economiques, Sociétés, Civilisations* (260pp, Johns Hopkins, £23.35, paperback £7.65, 0 8018 2776 0) contains ten articles on "Ritual, Religion and The Sacred".

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# Pre-capitalist preconceptions

Adrian Wooldridge

## MAURICE BLOCH

*Marxism and Anthropology: The History of a Relationship*  
180pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
£9.50.  
0 19 876091 4

The past two decades have produced an energetic revival of Marxist anthropology. Student radicalism made a number of gifted converts among apprentice anthropologists, while anti-colonial wars generated interest in the internal structures of peasant societies and encouraged a widespread re-examination of the relationship between advanced and dependent economies. The feminist movement has created an eager audience for Marxist notions of female power and sexual freedom in pre-class societies. De-Stalinization has promoted contacts between Soviet and Western anthropologists and provoked a measure of revision in communist orthodoxy.

Maurice Bloch has played an important part in bringing this revival to Britain. He has edited a standard collection of essays on the theme and he enjoys an easy familiarity with avant-garde French Marxist anthropology. His latest book is intended to introduce Marxist anthropology to a non-specialist audience. His account is strictly historical, though he adds an evaluation of Marx and Engels's anthropology in the light of modern research. But in general he refuses to give an analytical account of the relationship between his two themes, and it is as a work of history, rather than of theory, that this book must be judged.

Marx and Engels developed a precocious interest in anthropology, and Bloch devotes over half his book to

a discussion of their contributions to the subject. They turned to it for a combination of theoretical and rhetorical reasons. They sympathized with its evolutionary and materialist tone; they looked to it for evidence to extend their interpretation of history back beyond the ancient world; they felt that it provided independent support of their central contention that capitalism is a transient rather than a permanent social system. Their interpretation of the subject emphasized the contrast between primitive and capitalist societies. The primitive was defined by its lack of the central social institutions of capitalism: private property, the state and the family. In particular, they contrasted the contractual relationship of the labour market with the personal relationship of the kin network. They thus turned primitive society into a kind of ideal against which to measure the deficiencies of the capitalist system. Anthropology provided yet another missile to hurl at the complacent bourgeoisie.

How much of their argument can stand up to a critical examination? Bloch's answer to this question is a paradoxical one. The rhetorical side of their work remains powerful: their stress on the variety of social arrangements and on the peculiarity of capitalist notions of the family and property continues to command respect. But the empirical side is much less secure. Some of their ideas about property and the evolution of the state may still be valid, but their work on kinship is exploded. Their evidence is flimsy; their reasoning is flawed; and their vision of primitive communism is little short of nonsense. Their account of the evolution of social systems is much too Eurocentric. Bloch suggests that the success of their rhetoric undermined the validity of their empirical arguments. In treating primitive society as a classless ideal, they robbed themselves of the analytical tools which they needed to explain it.

Engels's death ended the first creative period of Marxist anthropology. The next generation tended to remember the letters of the founders but to forget their spirit; they petrified Marxism into a closed one-dimensional orthodoxy. They presented the history of all societies as an inescapable unilinear process, took every opportunity to emphasize a strict theory of materialist determination and tried to merge historical evolution with natural evolution. Bloch points to canonical, intellectual and political reasons for the success of this orthodoxy. Engels's work acquired the central position in Marxist thought; none of Marx's anthropological writings had as yet been published. The tradition was inevitably influenced by the naturalistic and determinist tone of his thought. Sociobiological explanations of social phenomena exercised an enormous appeal. Marxists and non-Marxists alike longed to do for human history what Darwin had managed to do for natural history. The controversy over revisionism built this interpretation into political polemic, to question which was to condemn oneself as "petty bourgeois" and "counter-revolutionary".

The collapse of the Second International fragmented the Marxist tradition along national lines. The Russian Revolution secured a permanent institutional base for the classical orthodoxy. This led to a brief period of intellectual experiment and ethnographic progress. Russian anthropologists gathered mountains of material on the ethnic diversity of the Soviet population, questioned some of Engels's distinctions between property-owning and pre-property-owning societies and suggested a variety of solutions to the peasant question. But the party wasted little time in forcing the subject back into its strait-jacket. Under Stalin it could do little more than illustrate the truth of a simplified version of Engels's theory. In America, the Marxist tradition

suffered the same fate as all materialist and evolutionary arguments: it was swamped by the fashion for cultural explanations. In Britain, Marxism was irrelevant to the golden age of anthropology, because functionalism was based upon a rejection of both evolutionary and conflict theory. In France, however, the story was rather different. Bloch is at his most informative on French anthropology. The Marxist tradition got off to a slow start in France, but during the 1960s, he argues, it began to exercise a powerful intellectual influence, encouraged by the war in Algeria and the opening up of the Communist Party line. But what secured it, according to Bloch, was the theoretical revolution brought about by Louis Althusser. Althusser's distinction between Marx's general intellectual method and its specific application to capitalism, combined with his emphasis on the canonical importance of *Capital*, had far-reaching implications for Marxist anthropology. The proper task of the faithful was no longer to repeat the words of the founders, but rather to apply their distinctive concepts to pre-capitalist modes of production. Many French anthropologists, notably Maurice Godelier, P. P. Rey and Emmanuel Terray, responded to this challenge by importing Althusser's variety of structuralism into their arguments; by analysing primitive communities with such concepts as class, exploitation and ideology; and by stressing the connections between primitive modes of production and the dominant capitalist system. One of the main points of this book is to advertise the merits of French Marxism. Under Stalin, Marxism may have ossified into an orthodoxy, but under Althusser it reclaimed its rightful role as a creative intellectual movement.

Unfortunately, Bloch's style does little to advance his cause. His favourite words are "totally", "wholly" and "fundamentally"; and he uses them with an exuberance which is reminiscent of Dave Spart. Thus, "the

fundamental Marxist contrast between production for use and production for exchange... needs fundamental reworking... in primitive societies, work and leisure are 'totally intertwined'. Engels followed Morgan in stressing 'the total relevance of Darwinism'. Bloch congratulates Godelier for "stressing a point that anthropology find difficult to accept and understand: the fact that kinship, or for that matter religion, is a genuine fundamental experience of many precapitalist peoples and that it is totally wrong to suggest that it is a kind of metaphor enforced by the powers that be". But two pages later, in order to balance his account, he reprimands Godelier with the observation that "close knowledge of people everywhere seems to reveal a situation where people are less totally mystified about the real conditions of their existence than suggested by Godelier". Bloch's evaluation of Marxist anthropology seems to depend on such an abuse of language. He deploys these key words to squash criticism and sidestep evidence. If Marx and Engels were wrong about primitive societies, at least their theory is fundamentally correct. If they got their arguments upside down, at least they recognized that everything is interconnected.

Bloch is optimistic about the future of his subject. If it is treated as method rather than as dogma, he argues, Marxism may generate a renaissance in anthropology. But such optimism owes more to faith than to observation. For more than half a century Marxist anthropology functioned as a political orthodoxy which was both intellectually irrelevant and rhetorically tedious. Its current revival has been bought at considerable cost. It has lost all its rhetorical appeal. It has fallen into the hands of a clique of squabbling ideologues. And it has compromised its ideological purity by flirting with "bourgeois" ideas. Marxist anthropology may well end up by modifying itself out of existence.

# Dancing themselves better

Alan Barnard

## RICHARD KATZ

*Bolling Energy: Community Healing among the Kalahari Kung*  
329pp. Harvard University Press.  
£17.50.  
0 674 07735 0

One of the most fascinating healing rituals in the world is the medicine dance of the Bushman or San peoples of southern Africa. Bushmen live in nomadic but territorial bands, each numbering only a few dozen individuals, and until very recently have gathered and hunted for all their subsistence. Unlike agriculture and pastoralism, which are labour-intensive, though high-yield activities, the foraging way of life apparently leaves much time for non-subsistence pursuits, and the medicine dance is perhaps the most important of these for the Bushmen.

Bolling Energy describes the medicine dance and related healing rituals of the Kung, who are not only the Bushmen best known to the outside world, but also the most skillful practitioners of community healing by trance performance. Half of all Kung men and ten per cent of the women are capable of achieving a trance state.

Medicine dances may be held at any time. Sometimes they are spontaneous, and sometimes planned a day or two in advance in order to give time for members of neighbouring bands to attend. No one is excluded. Indeed, the trance "cure" is intended for the physical benefit of everyone present, and not merely for any who happen to be ill. It is as much preventative as curative.

The dance usually begins in the early evening. Women of the band build a small fire, in an open place away from the grass huts of the encampment. Perhaps only a few are

present at the beginning, but before long all the women appear. They sing, over and over again, the same intensely hypnotic tunes. Their only accompaniment is fast, precise and almost deafening hand-clapping in diverse and complicated rhythms. Eventually, the entire band and its visitors are present. The men, and occasionally one or more women, dance in a great circle around the singers, then between them and directly past the fire; then around the singers again. They keep this up hour after hour with only brief pauses between each dance. Gradually, in the stomachs of one or more of the dancers, *nyum* ("medicine") begins to "boil". Metaphorical "death" (more literally known as *ika*, "trance") occurs, and the curing can begin in earnest.

Through much of this book Richard Katz tries hard, and with some success, to explain happenings from an IKung viewpoint. There are many long and semi-comprehensible quotations from IKung -trance performers (in translation), describing what *ika* is like. Professor Katz, in a proper spirit and on a proper level, retains the almost untranslatable IKung words *ika* and *nyum*, but unitalicized and Anglicized to "ika" and "nyum". In *ika* (which is the spelling used in Katz's more technical publications) men "see" God, spirits and animals and "feel" painful *nyum* rising to their heads and penetrating each part of their bodies.

The curing itself involves a trance performer placing his hands on the bodies of the participants: men, women, and children and anthropologists alike. Although spectators may sit at a separate fire, they too may be part of what is a communal ritual, and they too may be singled out for treatment. The dance often goes on all night, and in the morning everyone disperses, tired but emotionally and even physically better for it.

*Bolling Energy* is by no means the first account of the IKung medicine dance. Indeed Katz himself, among

many others, has published on the subject before, including papers which are incorporated in the present volume. But as Raymond Prince notes in the dust-jacket blurb, Katz's full-length version "puts flesh on the bare bones of earlier accounts". The emphasis is on detailed description, on trance as viewed by the performers, on education for "transcendence", on sociological, psychological, and psychological interpretation. Katz's background as an educationalist and psychologist is readily apparent and often used to good effect.

Another strength of the book is that it reveals rather more of the ethos of Bushman life than do the more traditional anthropological monographs. Like Marjorie Shostak in

her recent book *Nisa*, Katz gives us an unusual amount of biographical detail, and with it, a better picture of Bushman life than could any description based primarily on ecology, social structure or culture in the abstract. The drawback is that these latter concerns can only receive brief treatment in the present work. For that reason the book is best read in conjunction with, rather than in preference to, the more theoretical and anthropological monographs.

There is however one set of bare bones which no description of IKung trance performance, including this one, has yet covered with flesh: music and dance. There can be few readers of this book who have heard medicine dance music or seen a medicine dance,

even on film. Although no printed account - verbal, musical or kinesis - could portray the full feeling of the event, a much more detailed exposition on music and dance, and perhaps a partial score, would certainly help. Katz's description seems very incomplete without it.

In general, though, the book is an interesting and well-written piece of work, which should appeal to the layman as much if not more as to the anthropologist or psychologist. Indeed, Katz gives few of the comparisons or theoretical asides that a specialist reader might expect. He leaves the data, and the IKung, to speak for themselves. Few of the references in his extensive bibliography are even mentioned in the text.

# Poor man of God

Ahmed Al-Shahi

## SAID S. SAMATAR

*Oral Poetry and Somali Nationalism: The case of Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan*  
234pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£19.50.  
0 521 23233 1

Oral verse and "contrived" speech have been important in the history, politics, ecology, and social organization of the Somali pastoralists. Their significance has already been shown in the excellent work of I. M. Lewis and B. W. Andriewski, *Somali Poetry: An Introduction* (1964), but Said S. Samatar has made further researches, and introduces new material to good effect.

The second half of the book deals with the rise and fall of Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan, who emerged as the leader of the Somali nationalist movement, and whose aim

was to dislodge the Europeans (mainly British) and Ethiopians from Somalia. Dubbed by his enemies as the "Mad Mullah", but regarding himself as a "poor man of God", the Sayyid succeeded in rallying support for his cause in three different ways. First, he was a warrior whose political power stemmed from the support rendered by his own kin groups and from the alliances he concluded with other pastoralist clans. Secondly, the Sayyid was a mystic and a holy man who appealed to the Somalis through Islamic sentiment to drive out the foreign "infidels". On his return from the pilgrimage to Mecca, he brought to the Somalis the Saalihiya Sufi order, which was resented by the already established and powerful Qadiriya order. Through the Saalihiya he was able to unite clans and to declare a holy war against the foreign occupiers and their collaborators, establishing a movement which succeeded in harassing the British and others for two decades.

The movement was given impetus in a third way, with which much of this book is concerned: the Sayyid was both a poet and an orator, and as such he

influenced Somali poetry as well as furthering his cause. Much of his verse, which was composed between 1900 and 1920 (the year he died), was political, and directed against his enemies. Dr Samatar provides interesting quotations from it, though one would have liked to see some of these poems given in full with parallel text.

The political poetry of the Somali exemplified by the verse of Sayyid Muhammad 'Abdille Hasan and others, has a message: that it is preferable to talk and persuade than resort to the use of arms. It is unfortunate that this admirable principle has not always been observed in practice in Somalia.

*Journey through Kenya*, by Mohammed Amin, Duncan Wright, and Brian Teitler, with an introduction by the late William Holden, has recently been published (1979, Bodley Head, £24.95, 0 373 30485 3). The text contains a great deal of "historical" information - historical, geographical, biological, ecological, and anthropological - and is illustrated with 150 colour photographs.

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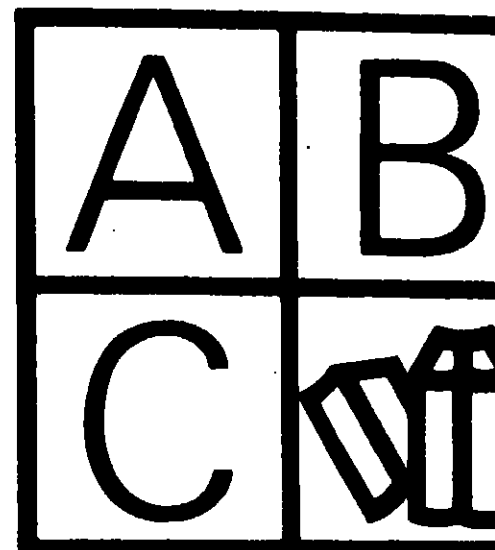
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## THE CONSCIENCE OF THE VICTORIAN STATE

EDITED BY PETER MARSH

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## COCKBURN'S MILLENNIUM

KARL MILLER

Henry Cockburn (1778-1854), a leading Scottish Whig of the nineteenth century, was one of the most influential of the Whig leaders. He was a leading Scottish Whig of the nineteenth century, and was one of the most influential of the Whig leaders. He was a leading Scottish Whig of the nineteenth century, and was one of the most influential of the Whig leaders.

3







# Moderately modernistic

Andrew Saint

## Nordic Classicism 1910-1930

180pp. The Museum of Finnish Architecture, Kasarmikatu 24, Helsinki. £12.50.  
951 9229 21 3

We forget it now, but the architecture most warmly admired in this country thirty years ago, as it had been for thirty years before that, was not German or French or even American, but Scandinavian. Today, a dim sense lingers on that the tradition of Scandinavian interior design and furniture is somehow superior to our own. But the respect and affection which British architects felt for their Scandinavian counterparts and which decisively shaped the looks of buildings as diverse as Norwich City Hall, the RIBA's Headquarters and the Royal Festival Hall, have vanished entirely.

This catalogue-cum-book, the product of an exhibition held at the Museum of Finnish Architecture in 1982, is a reminder of that connection – or more precisely, of the strongest link in the chain. In all four Scandinavian countries, the pattern of architecture between 1900 and 1930 falls into clear, comprehensible periods. First came "National Romanticism" in which Finland, seeking tokens of cultural identity perhaps more urgently than Norway, Denmark or Sweden, achieved most ardent expression through the arts-and-crafts oriented architecture of Eliel Saarinen and Lars Sonck. There ensued, from about 1910, a reaction towards greater discipline and elegance, the phase of "Nordic Classicism" which is the business of this book. This was led by Sweden and Denmark, the older and richer nations, with British architects looking chiefly towards the Swedish work of Ragnar Östberg, Gunnar Asplund and Ivar Tengbom. Scandinavian Classicism burst upon a wider world at the Gothenburg Exhibition of 1923. Thereafter a procession of English architects and students made the pilgrimage to Stockholm, some going on also to Copenhagen and Helsinki.

Soon however the wheel turned again. Visitors to the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930 found that the Swedes, under the leadership of Asplund and Sven Markelius, had

practically all turned to functionalism. But Scandinavian Modernism always wore a relaxed face which made it acceptable to the cautious, dogma-fearing English. Many younger post-war British designers came to feel that its greatest exponent, Alvar Aalto the Finn, was the touchstone for what a humane, liberal type of modern architecture ought to be about. Aalto, indeed, still fills that role for certain architectural theorists like Kenneth Frampton (a contributor to this volume), who wish to rescue the reputation of the Modern Movement from the accusations of error and rigidity so easily levelled against Gropius and Le Corbusier. Aalto's star, perhaps, has never been higher; but his predecessors have been unfairly eclipsed.

In some ways Nordic Classicism grew naturally from the romantic phase which preceded it. Östberg's Stockholm City Hall, the most visible public monument of the period, illustrates this well. Östberg won the commission as early as 1903, but it was erected (after manifold changes of brief and style) only in 1909-23. A building with a grand lake-side setting, it beautifully reconciles Venetian stateliness and richness with a lacy Swedish silhouette of cupolas and turrets. Inside, cool Classical interiors are decked out with handmade furnishings and metalwork in which everything is refined, pared down, elongated and made delicately sensual. Admiring British critics dubbed this blend of craftsmanship, restraint and sensuality "Swedish Grace". It pervaded Stockholm's public interiors of the 1920s, like Asplund's pretty, colourful Skandia Cinema and Tengbom's grander Concert Hall. Its origins can be sought in the spawdwork done during the National Romantic period by the Swedish Society of Arts and Crafts and in the teachings of I. G. Casson, the most respected architect of the previous generation. Little in English style was to be available on Clason, but it was under his influence that Asplund and others set up the informal Klara School, through which most architects of the "Swedish Grace" persuasion passed.

On the other hand, many Scandinavian designers hailed the new classicism as a break with the undisciplined, chauvinistic vulgarities of the immediate past. They revered the "cleanliness" and sobriety represented by international neo-classicism of the years around 1800, by

Soane in England, Ledoux in France and Schinkel in Germany, all of whom influenced, for instance, Asplund's circular Stockholm Public Library of 1920-28. Copenhagen in particular had a legacy of fine neo-classical buildings like Bredesbol's Thorvaldsen Museum which imparted a severity and power to certain Danish buildings of the period, from Carl Petersen's tiny Faborg Museum to the huge Police Headquarters of Hack Kampmann and Aage Rafn.

Nevertheless, following German architects and theorists like Heinrich Tessenow, Paul Mebes and A. E. Brinckmann, the Scandinavians valued neo-classicism's simplicity above its monumentality. The lure of simplicity was especially strong in the case of Italy, a country which deeply attracted the Nordic Classicists. When, after the cooled-up period of the First World War, they were able to travel freely again in Europe, the famed Scandinavian fell upon Italian light, colour and texture with ecstasy. Yet what they cherished most were the plainer buildings. "Palladio, Palladio," wrote the Finnish architect Hiljund Ekelund, "in dress uniform at every street corner, with columns, architraves, cornices – the whole arsenal. Impressive but tiring. Between them simple, bare houses, just walls and holes, but with distinct harmonious proportions." It follows that many of the nicest works of the period are simple, colour-washed villas and housing projects. In Sweden, where good facing bricks were hard to obtain, even the big public buildings were often rendered and gaily painted; in Stockholm, Tengbom's concert hall is a rich blue. Asplund's library a more traditional ochre. In austere Denmark, by contrast, plainer washes or brick surfaces prevailed.

The arrangement of this dual-language catalogue, by nation and then by individual architect, with essays preceding each of the four

sections and a good introduction by Henrik Anderson of the Swedish Museum of Architecture, is clear and informative, and allows the reader to grasp the respective countries' contributions to Nordic Classicism. The Norwegians seem to have been the least involved in the movement. The Finns were livelier, but the constraints of the post-independence period limited their scope and the one large public monument of the time, J. S. Sirén's Parliament Building, seems sadly lumpy. In informal projects like the wood-built garden suburb of Käpylä near Helsinki they were unsurpassed, and in Aalto, who in the 1920s was working quietly in the provinces in the tradition of low-key Italian Classicism, they possessed an architect of astonishing future elasticity. The Danes were drier and less absolutely committed to Classicism, but could boast some original interior designers like Aage Rafn and Kaare Klint, and were to the fore in promoting the kind of decent simplified housing projects which were to be typical of Scandinavian social democracy. Danish Classicism was not especially influential abroad, but two Danes of the period, both still living, left their mark in this country: S. E. Rasmussen, whose London: *The Unique City* remains after fifty years the most perceptive introduction to our capital's architecture, and Ove Arup, to whose creative engineering skills many early Modern Movement buildings in England owe their forms as well as their structures.

Overwhelmingly, though, it was to the prosperous and settled culture of Sweden that admirers of Classicism looked. Here two figures particularly stand out. One is Ivar Tengbom, whose large practice included the delicate, twin-towered Hogafelds Church set on a hill overlooking Stockholm, a couple of commercial palazzi which rise well above pastiche and the colonnaded, ornamented Stockholm Concert Hall, perhaps the

Swedish building most copied by the English. The RIBA gave Tengbom its Gold Medal in 1938, and recently the Architectural Association showed an enterprising exhibition of his work, to keep up the tradition of English reverence. The other and more substantial figure is Gunnar Asplund. An architect of immense assurance and vitality, his small oeuvre spans the whole range of Scandinavian architecture during this period and his Stockholm City Library is the central monument of Nordic Classicism; yet it was Asplund also who devised the setting for the exhibition of 1930 which drew everyone forward unrepentantly towards functionalism. He, more than the then obscure Aalto, was the father of the Scandinavian Modern Movement.

Finally, why did the Scandinavian achievement appeal so deeply in England? It seems mostly to be a matter of parallel development. In Sweden and elsewhere, an arts-and-crafts tradition became blended with classicism; the same thing happened with English neo-Georgianism. But the Scandinavians brought to this fusion an extra originality which appealed to British architects looking for a compromise with modernism and the teflinging principles of Le Corbusier. The architects who went Swedish, therefore, were the moderate modernizers, people like Grey Wornum, Giles Gilbert Scott and C. H. James, rather than deklars like Lutyens or Blomfield on the one hand, or young turks like Wells Coates or Maxwell Fry on the other. Their intelligent middle road is just beginning to seem attractive, now that historicism is no longer the dirty word it once was. If architects insist on harking back to Classicism once again as they seem to be doing, they could do worse than go and see how it was being done sixty years ago in the Sweden of Tengbom and Asplund – decently, cleverly and above all quietly.

## Drop-dead effects

Reynier Banham

### JOHN CHASE

Exterior Decoration: Hollywood's Inside Out Houses  
124pp. Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls. \$19.95.  
09121588 883

Visitors interested in the architecture of Los Angeles, weighed down by the massive "Gebhard and Winter" (the standard guide-book), are apt to wish that the authors had concentrated on fewer, more important buildings and left out most of those that require only a one-line entry such as, "Greatly remodelled". Gebhard and Winter have a case, however: many visitors will be looking for examples of minor genres peculiar to the area – Way Line Moderne for instance – and should be served. However, most of them will only be pursuing one or two of these fancies, and they will resent the space allotted to those that don't interest them.

The answer proposed by some, when the guide first came out, was to remove the one-liners and transfer them into a series of "Freak Supplements" (one for each fancy or building type – and here, quite accidentally, is the first of them: John Chase's scholarly study of "West Hollywood Re-Models"). The book's title explains why the houses are "inside-out": the display on the outside (the kind of taste, sometimes called "Hairstresser Baroque") that is normally reserved for the decadent privacy of the interior. As one of Chase's captions has it: "The plants and wall materials have been selected for their color and textural values in much the same way as drapes would be selected to harmonize with or contrast with a sofa."

Colour and texture, however, are only half the story. In a sub-culture where the interior decorator's ambitions are summed up in the epic phrase "I don't want that people should say 'How beautiful, I want things that drop dead'", extensive three-dimensional work will be required, and so will "features" such as baroque

fountains, translucent replicas of the Venus de Milo and vast chandeliers. And it is the transference of this sort of thing to the exterior that is the true essence of the style.

Chase is very good on the two basic devices with which unremarkable façades can be elevated to the "drop-dead" category: the clip-on false mansard roof (originally a restaurant which, hence, *Gourmet-Mansard*), a long-established sub-style and the "Woolf-Pullman Drive" with its arched or segmented door-surround rising into the mansard above. Its inventor, John Woolf, is the nearest thing to a founder the style can boast, and thus the nearest thing to a hero in Chase's narrative.

The use of the word "style" in this context may cause some concern, but this is no vernacular, born of innocent and indigent craftsmanship – quite the opposite: it is knowing, sophisticated, and almost as expensive as it tries to look. It may be kitsch, but no more so than many allegedly respectable current variants on Modern architecture; indeed, Chase draws attention to examples from the 1950s which anticipate the Post-Modernism of East-coast scholasticism (such as Michael Graves and Robert Stern) by as much as two decades.

Where "Exterior Decoration" most threatens the value-system of respectable architecture, however, is in its inability to see great buildings as having any lasting value. Quite a few distinguished hard-line modernists have seen their works featured as classics of the "Drop-Dead" genre. The most pliant example of this in the book is a spare, airy, steel-and-glass house designed by Craig Ellwood situated off Coldwater Canyon and internationally known as a supreme example of the Case-Study programme, a series of diatonic houses intended to teach Angelinos about Functionalism. Now re-done by the egregious John Woolf with Hindoo-Regency trim and Doric columns over its skinny metal uprights ("to give this beautifully-made, contemporaneous building a patina of age"), it gets the nod from *House Beautiful* magazine, in which it is compared to Paestum!

Chase's comments on all this are worth quoting for a number of reasons, but chiefly for the light they may shed on the attitude with which young architectural historians (and not only in California) set about their work:

What is so astonishing about this remodel is the attitude expressed in it that anything can be transformed into anything else. To attempt the transformation of the Case Study House No. 17 into a Greek temple with a Hollywood Regency street façade requires the most profound disregard of tradition. The Woolf re-model was, however, quite successful in bringing out the simplified classicism... of the original.

This will paraphrase quite neatly into a fair description of the direction of contemporary revisionist architectural history:

What is so astonishing about anyone taking this remodel seriously is the attitude that absolutely anything can be transformed into anything else. To lavish so much scholarly attention on a poor imitation of a Greek Temple with a Hollywood Regency facade... requires the complete abandonment of traditional notions of artistic quality. The Tom Wolfe re-hash, however, is quite successful in bringing out the simplified reductionism... of modern architecture.

Or words to that effect... In what is effectively a re-run of the pioneer Pop punditry of the 1950s, Chase goes beyond a superficial camp enthusiasm for trendy trash, and gives the product a thorough, well-observed and well-researched treatment, taking in pretensions as given; and thus showing to be above such things. The book is that must be extended to the literature an invaluable addition to the literature on Los Angeles should be compared with a warning that it may prove inferior to the mental health of those who believe that only the Biennial Verities are the scholar's care.

### DAVID ROSAND

Painting in Cinquecento Venice:  
Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto  
346pp with 157 black-and-white and eight colour illustrations. Yale University Press. £30.  
0 300 02826 9

The title of this book suggests a general history of Venetian sixteenth-century painting focused on the work of three of its greatest masters, but what we in fact get is a series of separate essays, all of which, with the exception of Chapter 5, have been published elsewhere. Although extensively revised and interrelated one with another, they nonetheless only deal with selected aspects of the subject. "Studies in Venetian Cinquecento Painting" would be a more appropriate name, since *Painting in Cinquecento Venice* does not provide an overall history of painting in sixteenth-century Venice, but the studies are, individually and collectively, of great interest and to revise them, pull them together, and make them available in book form has been eminently worthwhile. They offer much important new information and many new perspectives on the richest century of art of the richest Schools of European painting. The book is a contribution of the first importance to the study of Venetian art and one which, not least, is as exhaustive and exemplary range of bibliographical reference, no general library covering the visual arts should be without.

The first of the five essays, "The Conditions of Painting in Renaissance Venice", first published in *L'Art* in 1970, relates the conservatism of Venetian art to the conservatism of the Venetian state, although David Rosand exaggerates this as against what he considers the more innovative tendencies of Florentine art. The point is that Venice was in a position of the artist in Venice and on the continuing power of the Venetian Painters' Guild, the Arte dei Dipintori. He draws attention to the emerging distinction between *deputati* and *pittori* – the latter referring to what came to be called the artists, the former to anyone working with brushes – and comments on the continuing power of the state-controlled guild structure in the sixteenth century. So strong was this that even after a century of struggle the *pittori*, although they finally joined independence from the *deputati*, failed to form their own Academy and only achieved a separate Guild governed by the same State regulations as the traditional guilds, including the Arte dei Dipintori from which they had just escaped. The kind of cross-fertilization between the arts which was standard in Florence and which permitted, at its most elevated level, the career of Michelangelo as the simultaneously painter, sculptor and architect, was impossible in Venice, not only because of the tradition of separating the arts but also because guild regulations made it illegal.

Professor Rosand then moves on to the historiography of Venetian painting and its account of Venetian technical practice, particularly the significance of the development of the oil medium. Unfortunately his own view of that practice is seriously marred by the misapprehension that Venetian painters, after Giorgione, customarily worked on a toned ground. But Titian's paintings – the ones of Venetian Cinquecento art – are almost always painted on a white ground and, while tonalism is of course of primary importance in the art of Titian and to a degree in that of Jacopo Bassano, it is present only to a very modified extent in Venetian art. Indeed, Rosand's whole picture of this aspect of Venetian art is seriously distorted by an over-emphasis on the significance of tone as opposed to color and of Giorgione's tonalities as opposed to the late Bellini's tonalities. Almost Cézannian in its explorations into color and into new ways of interpreting what is seen in the work of Giovanni Bellini receive no mention, although this coloristic tradition is at least as important for the development of Cinquecento

Venetian painting, and especially of Titian, as is the work of Giorgione.

The next two essays are devoted to Titian, and were both originally published in the *Art Bulletin*. The first of them, "Titian and the challenge of the Altarpiece", deals with what Rosand describes as "Titian's transformation of the notion of religious vision" and, in so far as it concerns the relationship of Titian's paintings to the sites for which they were intended, acknowledges and develops the ideas of the late Johannes Wilde. His view, pioneered by Wilde, that the original eloquence and meaning of Titian's paintings can only be fully grasped when they are seen in the place for which they were painted is particularly apparent in his discussion of the Pesaro Altarpiece in the Frari – here revised because the recent cleaning of the picture has produced new evidence about its evolution. Readers acquainted with an earlier controversy about this painting will be glad to hear, if they do not know already, that the columns, whose authenticity Rosand and others (including, I am ashamed to say, myself) at one time doubted, have been shown to be genuine. There is a good account of the transition from Titian's original plan for the fictive points to the actual painting, which showed the scene taking place in a kind of transept opening up from the frame of the painting into the side of the church, and of the new plan in which the giant columns are deliberately disjoined from the rather fantastic architecture of the frame and so "declare a new order of proportion for a heavenly architecture".

This is surely a correct assessment of Titian's creative intentions which, in the picture's cleaned state, are likewise made manifest in the contrast between the visionary brilliance of the colour of the holy figures and the muted colours of the donors. Rosand's succeeding remarks on Titian's main Venetian altarpieces also convincingly relate the paintings both to their sites and to the texts from which they come; he emphasizes what he considers to be Titian's use of controlled visual symbolism, particularly the symbolism of light, in order to give dramatic expression to his themes.

The extent of that symbolism, the way it functions in Titian's paintings and its relation to style, is the subject of the central essay in the book, taking as its centrepiece the "Presentation of the Virgin" – still on the wall of the Scuola della Carità, now the Accademia, for which it was painted. Rosand clearly regards this essay as a degree exemplary in its method of exploration and he is somewhat dismissive of the frivolity of earlier scholars who have seen this painting as a joyous exercise in the genre-like traditions of scuola painting, a re-doing of Caraccio after nature. Rosand does not deny this element, but he plays it down, seeking to relate all the elements of the picture to a central theme: that of the Virgin as an embodiment of divine wisdom symbolized by light. The painting is, he tells us, a far more serious and profound affair than we had lightly supposed.

This view is to be taken seriously, particularly as, in contrast to the more extreme exponents of a primarily iconographic interpretation of works of art, Rosand never suggests that Titian was merely the illustrator of a pre-ordained programme laid down by others. As he has already stated in an earlier essay, only when themselves would be the potential pictorial potential of a text and only through their close and imaginative reading could the word become paint. But although I agree with this there is a serious difficulty in the kind of search for meaning which he undertakes. It is that the complexity of the search and the intellectual interest of the route can easily distort the nature of the discoveries made concerning the content of the painting itself, so that elements often quite conventional in their context, can appear to be part of a mighty intellectual scheme which is the invention of the scholar rather than of the artist.

Rosand's interpretation of the

## Ideas and improvisations

John Steer

"Presentation of the Virgin" includes a discussion of the buildings which flank the temple steps up which the tiny, light-encircled figure of the Virgin so diligently climbs. He points out that the building which, according to tradition, stood next to the Temple of Solomon, was the Palace of Solomon and that this building was famous for its columned portico. Is not the columned building immediately behind the Virgin an obvious reference to this? Behind this is a further building whose brickwork plainly imitates that of the Palazzo Ducale. Does not this imply an equation between the Temple of Solomon and the Palazzo Ducale in Venice and is not the whole – there are further more complex strands in the argument – representative of the wisdom of the Venetian state here paralleled with the wisdom of the Virgin, since the Palace of the Doges is itself a Palace of Justice and was associated with the wisdom of Solomon, a scene of whose judgment graces a corner of the Palazzo itself? Rosand feels that the whole adds up to an integrated statement of specifically Venetian values. "At a time when modern Central Italian scenographic modernism – he is thinking primarily of Peruzzi's "Presentation" in Santa Maria della Pace – "were rendering the Venetian tableau composition aesthetically obsolete, Titian demonstrated, and on a grand scale, the still vital potential of the native tradition, it celebrates the continuity and stability of the Serenissima and of course of its institutions such as the scuola grande".

To this my response is simultaneously "boloney" and "of course". "Boloney" because to suppose that, in the integrated way Rosand seems to be suggesting, Titian set out to demonstrate these concepts is contrary to everything we know about the spontaneous and improvisatory nature of his procedures as a painter. "Of course" because the artist's obviously joyous adaptation of the conventions of Venetian scuola painting, such as the inclusion of buildings which are imaginatively transfigured variants of the architecture of Venice, is in itself an expression of his innate Venetian-ness and a celebration of Venetian values. It is not so much that the kind of symbolic interpretation to which Rosand exposes almost every part of the picture is necessarily wrong – theologians who looked at the painting may well have thought about it like this – but that it somehow distorts the picture and the processes of creation which brought it about. Surely, it is likely that Titian had from childhood associated his experience of mountains and clouds with what he had heard of the *Song of Songs* – it would be astonishing if an imaginative, visually orientated youth had not done so – and it is certain that the obelisk in the "Presentation" is there because, by tradition, it has an association with divine wisdom. Nevertheless its presence in this particular painting must to a large degree be conventional and was surely accepted as such both by artist and patron. Each time it appears it cannot be made to carry the full weight of inherited meanings that lie behind it; a weight which the fragile structure of this painting (or indeed any painting) is far too light to carry. It is of course the duty of the scholar to draw attention to such meanings but in doing so he must be careful not to make things which are for the artist quite natural and straightforward – for example, the inclusion of an obelisk in the "Presentation" – into complex intellectual acts, or to suppose either that a painting which is not an expression of such complex intellectual acts is "merely decoration". In every aspect of this painting Titian's imagination is at work, but I believe it functions in a much more direct and less theoretical way than Rosand supposes.

To do him justice he tries very hard to stress the organic nature of Titian's creative process and not simply "to replace a formal analysis by an iconographic one" but the dangers in his approach are perhaps illustrated by drawing attention to the one element in the painting about which he is certainly wrong: the topography of the landscape. He states, in company with most earlier writers, including myself, that it shows the mountains of the Dolomites around Titian's native Cadore. In fact it shows nothing of the kind. It represents, of course in a somewhat idealized form, the range of mountains stretching from Feltrina Belluno, up the Pieve valley, with Monte San Mauro in the foreground and the Tre Piave behind. The landscape of this marvellous valley, still an earthly paradise, with its easily recognizable mountain ranges, forms the setting of virtually all Titian's landscape backgrounds of the 1530s, as opposed to the paintings of the preceding decades which generally represent the plains of the Veneto. Clearly his feeling about this particular landscape was a primary factor in Titian's creative work at this period and even if it is the case, which seems unlikely, that the presence of these two famous Dolomite mountain tops in this picture, is a specific reference by him to the *Song of Songs*, what is most interesting, historically as well as aesthetically, is not the reference itself but the concrete form in which it is manifested: the new, joyous realization of the ruggedness of the mountains, the liberating realities of space and air.

Contemporaries of course knew this. It was of this kind of purely visual experience that Aretino drew when, seeing through Titian's eyes, he painted his word picture of the Grand Canal at sunset, and we can be sure that he and others would have apprehended in a similar way the familiar old woman with a basket of eggs who sits, literally below stairs, in the very foreground of Titian's painting. There is good reason to believe that she does, as Rosand says, embody, in her person and her position, the idea of the synagoga rejecta, and I do not doubt that the members of the Scuola would have known this. But would they not have taken it more or less for granted? What surely would have excited them as it excites us is the humanity with which the idea is realized; the brilliance and tenderness with which the old woman is painted and the references to similar figures in other paintings they knew, particularly the old woman in Caraccio's *St. Ursula* cycle. The danger of Rosand's kind of analysis is that it seeks to situate the artist's power of mind, not in the act of painting but in the creation of a system of symbolic reference, which, even if present, could never be central to the experience which the painting gives. It is for this reason that, illuminating as what he has to say is, it does not, as an account of the painting's meaning, either for us or for the artist, carry conviction. In this essay Rosand seems to have forgotten that for visual artists, as Gauguin said about Raphael, sensation is likely to be formulated before thought.

But, this essay is not typical of the author's thinking as a whole. The two concluding essays on Veronese and Tintoretto are often brilliant in their exposition of the content of style and of particular value because, in a way far more systematic than has been attempted before, they relate painting to the practice of the Cinquecento theatre, a most likely source of direct inspiration for artists and one far too little explored. Rosand is also to be congratulated on introducing into the discussion of the iconography of later sixteenth-century painting the religious works of Aretino, which have also hitherto been curiously neglected.

But while the substance of these essays is of great value, Rosand's manner of expressing himself can be, particularly in the last essay, somewhat inflated and provides, on almost every page, quotations which are ready candidates for Pseudo-Corner. The tendency to give a factitious air of intellectual complexity to quite simple things is the bane of academic writing on art. It is a pity that Rosand, who often writes extremely well, should fall a victim to it.

Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), called by Winckelmann "father of German Art", is the subject of two new internationally packaged and profusely illustrated books, both written by eminent Dürer scholars. Fedja Anzelevsky's *Dürer: his life and art* (273pp. Gordon Fraser, £50, 0 8602 068 2) was first published in 1980 and has been translated by Heide Grieve. Beginning with a general background chapter on Nuremberg, where Dürer was born, the artist's career is followed chronologically, with each of some ten chapters devoted to a short but significant phase – the founding of Dürer's workshop, Italy, the Emperor Maximilian, a journey to the Netherlands in 1520. There are 240 illustrations, of which about a quarter are in colour, showing Dürer's astonishing command of a variety of mediums and subjects.

Peter Strieder's *Dürer: Paintings, prints, drawings* (400pp. Frederick Muller, £35, 0 584 93038 1), translated by Nancy M. Gordon and Walter L. Strauss, has a larger format and almost twice as many pictures (455 including 140 in colour). The author's approach is thematic rather than chronological, with chapters entitled "The Nuremberg Environment", "Encounters", "His Works". Both books contain an index, bibliography and list of works, but Strieder's includes additional sections by other scholars: Gisel Goldberger on the technical analysis of the "Four Apostles", Josephine Harnest on perspective and Matthias Mendel on Dürer's writings.

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